







OEMS

BY

ELIZABETH AKERS
(FLORENCE PERCY).

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Allen
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CONTENTS.

	Page
 IOLET-PLANTING	3
Snow	9
November	11
Among the Laurels	12
In Illness	17
My Soldier	19
True	22
Broken Faith	23
In Washington	25
Time	29
Babyhood	31
Going to sleep	34
Left Behind	36
The Dream	39
Endurance	43
The Sparrow at Sea	45
White Head	48
Loved too late	51
Singing in the Rain	55
Then	57
An Autumn Violet	59
The Mountains	61

A Spring Love-Song	63
The Amber Rosary	65
Our Soldiers	69
Good by	71
Foreshadowing	74
The Clay-Child	77
Lost Light	79
The City of the Living	81
October	85
At Last	87
Little Losses	89
Last	90
Thistles	92
Gertrudie	93
Forgotten	94
Water-Lilies	96
In an Attic	98
Castles in Spain	100
October to May	102
Evening	104
Prophecy	106
Skeletons	108
A Fantasy	111
Rothermel's Willow	114
"My Darling"	118
Bonds	119
My Peace	121
Christmas Carols	123
The Vision of Violets	125
The New Temple	129

CONTENTS.

v

Werter to Charlotte	132
Restlessness	134
Bella	136
April Rain	139
Consolation	141
When the Leaves are turning brown	144
The Singer	146
Autumn Rain	149
Out at Sea	151
A Bride	153
Chrysanthemums	156
A Dream	160
City Smoke	164
In Vain	165
Sea-Birds	167
The Chamber of Rest	168
Where the Roses grew	171
Little Nannie	173
Whom the Lord loveth	175
Sleep	177
Answer me	179
Cradle-Time	180
Kisses	183
April Snow	184
Voyaging	185
Believe in me	188
Rock me to sleep	190
March	193
Spring at the Capital	194
"Blessed Dreams"	197

Two Summers	199
The Return of the Regiment	201
An Old Portrait	205
Karl	207
A Potomac Picture	209
Away from Home	211
Thine	213
The Way to Youth	216
Tempt me no More	218
April	219
At the Gate	221
Peace	223
Lost	225
Nightfall	227
June	229
“The Upward Road”	231
Promoted	234
Vine-Life	237
The Watchers	239
In the Defences	242
My Ship	247
Bringing our Sheaves with us	250





P O E M S .





VIOLET-PLANTING.



HE heavy apple-trees

Are shaking off their snow in breezy
play ;

The frail anemones

Have fallen, fading, from the lap of May ;

Lanterned with white, the chestnut branches wave,
And all the woods are gay.

Come, children, come away,

And we will make a flower-bed to-day

About our dear one's grave.

O, if we could but tell the wild-flowers where

Lies his dear head, gloried with sunny hair,

So noble and so fair,

How would they haste to bloom and weep above

The heart that loved them with so fond a love !

Come, children, come!
From the sweet ferny meads
Wherein he used to walk in days of yore, —
From the green path that leads,
When the long dusty road seems wearisome,
Up to his father's door, —
Gather the tender shoots
Of budding promise, fragrance, and delight,
Fresh-sprouting violet-roots, —
That, when the first June night
Shall draw about his bed its fragrant gloom,
This grave-mound may be bathed in balmy bloom,
With loving memories eloquently dumb; —
Come, children, come!

No more, alas, alas!

O fairest blossoms which the wild bee sips,
Along your pleasant places shall he pass,
Ere from your freshened leaves the night-dew
drips, —
Culling your bloom in handfuls from the grass,
Pressing your tender faces to his lips, —
Ah, never any more!
Yet I recall, a little while before

He passed behind this mystery of death,
How, bringing home great clusters won away
From the dark wood-haunts where he loved to stray,
Until his dewy garments were replete

With wafts of odorous breath, —

With sods all mossy-sweet,

And, all awake and purple with new bloom,

He filled and crowded every window-seat,

Until the pleasant room

Was fragrant with your mystical perfume :

Now vainly do I watch beside the door —

Ah, never any more !

Alas, how could I know

That I so soon should strow

Your blossoms warm with tears, above his head ?

That your wet roots would cling

About the hand that wears his bridal ring,

When he who placed it there lay cold and dead ?

O violets, live and grow,

That, ere the bright days go,

This turf may be with rarest beauty crowned !

Nay, shrink not from my touch,

For these be careful and most loving hands,
 Fearing and hoping much,
Which thus disturb your fair and wondering bands
But to transfer them to more holy ground.

 Dear violets, bloom and live !
 To this beloved tomb
 Your beauty and your bloom
Are the most precious tribute we can give ;
And O, if your sweet soul of odor goes,
Blended with the clear trills of singing birds,
 Farther than my poor speech
 Or wailing cry can reach
Into that realm of shadowy repose,
 Toward which I blindly yearn,
Praying in silence, " O my love, return ! "
Yet dare not try to touch with groping words,
 So far it seems, and sweet, —
The realm wherein I may not hope to be
 Until my way-worn feet
Put off the shoes of this mortality, —
 O, let your incense-breath,
Laden with all this weight of love and woe
For him who went away so long ago,
 Bridge for me Time and Death !

Blow, violets, blow !

And tell him in your blossoming o'er and o'er,
How in the places which he used to know
His name is still breathed fondly as of yore ;
Tell him how often in the dear old ways,

Where bloomed our yesterdays, —

The radiant days which I shall find no more, —

My lingering footsteps shake .

The dew-drops from your leaves, for his dear sake :

Wake, blue eyes, wake !

The earliest breath of June

Blows the white tassels from the cherry boughs,

And in the deepest shadow of the noon

The mild-eyed oxen browse.

How tranquilly he sleeps,

He whom so bitterly we mourn as dead !

Although the new month sweeps

The over-blossomed spring-flower from his bed,

Giving fresh buds therefor,

Although beside him still Love waits and weeps,

And yonder goes the war.

Wake, violets, wake !

Open your blue eyes wide ! .

Watch faithfully his lonely pillow here ;
 Let no rude footfall break
Your slender stems, or crush your leaves aside ;
 See that no harm comes near
 The dust to me so dear,
 O violets, hear !
The clouds hang low and heavy with warm rain, —
 And, when I come again,
Lo, with your blossoms this loved grave shall be
 Blue as the marvellous sea,
Laving the borders of his Italy !



SNOW.



O, what wonders the day hath brought,
Born of the soft and slumbrous snow !
Gradual, silent, slowly wrought ;
Even as an artist, thought by thought,
Writes expression on lip and brow.

Hanging garlands the eaves o'erbrim,
Deep drifts smother the paths below ;
The elms are shrouded, trunk and limb,
And all the air is dizzy and dim
With a whirl of dancing, dazzling snow.

Dimly out of the baffled sight
Houses and church-spires stretch away ;
The trees, all spectral and still and white,
Stand up like ghosts in the failing light,
And fade and faint with the blinded day.

Down from the roofs in gusts are hurled
The eddying drifts to the waste below ;

And still is the banner of storm unfurled,
Till all the drowned and desolate world
Lies dumb and white in a trance of snow.

Slowly the shadows gather and fall,
Still the whispering snow-flakes beat ;
Night and darkness are over all :
Rest, pale city, beneath their pall !
Sleep, white world, in thy winding-sheet !

Clouds may thicken, and storm-winds breathe :
On my wall is a glimpse of Rome, —
Land of my longing ! — and underneath
Swings and trembles my olive-wreath ;
Peace and I are at home, at home !



NOVEMBER.



THE drifting clouds are dark and drear,
The blossoms die of cold and fear,
The wild wind mourns the fading year,
And winter threatens near.

O love, our sky is overcast,
Our sweet hopes fall before the blast,
The future darkens, dim and vast,
And life is wearing fast.

Yet sunshine brightens after rain,
The darkness comes and goes again,
So solace follows bitter pain,
As seasons wax and wane.

Then clasp my hand with closer hold,
True hearts are never unconsoled, —
They fear not care, nor cloud, nor cold,
And smile at growing old!

AMONG THE LAURELS.



THE sunset's gorgeous dyes
Paled slowly from the skies,
And the clear heaven was waiting for
the stars,
As side by side we strayed
Along a sylvan glade,
And found our pathway crossed by rustic bars.
Beyond the barrier lay
A green and tempting way,
Arched with fair laurel-trees, abloom and tall,
Their cups of tender snow
Edged with a rosy glow,
And warm, sweet shadows trembling over all.
The chestnuts sung and sighed,
The solemn oaks replied,
And distant pine-trees crooned in cradling tones ;
While music low and clear
Gushed from the darkness near,
Where a shy brook went tinkling over stones.

Soft mosses, damp and sweet,

Allured our waiting feet,

And brambles veiled their thorns with treacherous
bloom ;

While tiny flecks of flowers,

Which owned no name of ours,

Added their mite of beauty and perfume.

And hark ! a hidden bird,

To sudden utterance stirred

As by a wondrous love too great to bear

With voiceless silence long,

Burst into passionate song,

Filling with his sweet trouble all the air.

Then one, whose eager soul

Could brook no small control,

Said, "Let us thread this pleasant path, dear
friend :

If thus the *way* can be

So beautiful to see,

How much more beautiful must be the *end* !

"Follow ! this solitude

May shrine the haunted wood,

Storied so sweetly in romance and rhyme, —
Secure from human ill,
And rarely peopled still
By Fauns and Dryads of the olden time.

“A spot of hallowed ground
By mortal yet unfound,
Sacred to nymph and sylvan deity, —
Where foiled Apollo glides,
And bashful Daphne hides
Safe in the shelter of her laurel-tree!”

“Forbear!” the other cried, —
“O, leave the way untried!
Those joys are sweetest which we only guess;
And the impatient soul,
That seeks to grasp the whole,
Defeats itself by its own eagerness.

“Let us not rudely shake
The dew-drop from the brake
Fringing the borders of this haunted dell;
All the delights which are —
The present and the far —
Lose half their charm by being known too well!”

“ And he mistakes who tries
To search all mysteries, —
Who leaves no cup undrained, no path untracked ;
Who seeks to know too much
Brushes with ruthless touch
The bloom of Fancy from the brier of Fact.

“ Keep one fair myth aloof
From hard and actual proof, —
Preserve some dear delusions as they seem ;
Since the reality,
How bright soe'er it be,
Shows dull and tame beside our marvellous dream.

“ Leave this white page unscored, †
This rare realm unexplored,
And let dear Fancy roam there as she will :
Whatever page we turn,
However much we learn,
Let there be something left to dream of still !”

Wherefore, for aught we know,
The golden apples grow

In the green vale to which that pathway leads ;
The spirits of the wood
Still haunt its solitude,
And Pan sits piping there among the reeds !



IN ILLNESS.



WHEN violets blossom in the spring,

Dear heart,

And May-flowers nestle in the moss,

When the red-breasted robins sing,

And the glad sunshine smiles across

The new green earth, who dreams of loss,

Or vainly grieves

At missing last year's faded leaves ?

There will be violets in the spring,

Dear heart ;

But haply I shall not be here :

And will the brooks or robins sing

Less jocundly ? Believe me, dear,

I am of autumn, — faded, sere :

And who would be

Sad in the spring-time, missing me ?

You pity me, — life seems to you,

Dear heart,

So much a thing to be desired ;
But I have toiled the wide world through,
My whole heart aches, and I am tired ;
The aims to which my soul aspired
 Seem poor and small :
Only Love saves us, after all !

And mine has been so full of gloom,
 Dear heart, —
So twinned with sorrow or with fear,
It never came to perfect bloom ;
And now the harvest time is here,
My fields lie bare. But *you* are dear,
 And I could die
Upon your breast without a sigh.

Now hush, O hush ! I kiss your tears,
 Dear heart.

This grief is more than I can claim :
Whether I live to threescore years,
Or perish with this candle-flame,
I love and thank you all the same :
 Then, love, be still,
And let it be as God may will.

MY SOLDIER.



UPON a hard-won battle-field,
Whose recent blood-stains shock the
skies,

By hasty burial half-concealed,
With death in his dear eyes,
My soldier lies.

Oh, thought more sharp than bayonet-thrust, —
Of blood-drops on his silken hair,
Of his white forehead in the dust,
Of his last gasping prayer,
And I not there !

I know, while his warm life escaped,
And his blue eyes closed shudderingly,
His heart's last fluttering pulses shaped
One yearning wish for me, —
Oh agony !

For I, in cruel ignorance,
While yet his last sigh pained the air,

I trifled, — sung or laughed, perchance,
With roses in my hair,
All unaware.

In dreams I see him fall again,
Where cannons roar and guidons wave, —
Then wake to hear the lonesome rain,
Weeping the fallen brave,
Drip on his grave.

Since treason sought our country's heart,
Ah, fairer body never yet
From nobler soul was torn apart;
No braver blood has wet
Her coronet.

No spirit more intense and fine
Strives where her starry banners wave;
No gentler face, beloved, than thine,
Sleeps in a soldier's grave, —
No heart more brave.

And, though his mound I may not trace,
Or weep above his buried head,

The grateful spring shall find the place,
And with her blossoms spread
His quiet bed.

The soul I loved is still alive,
The name I loved is Freedom's boast ;
I clasp these helpful truths, and strive
To feel, though great the cost,
Nothing is lost ;

Since all of him that erst was dear
Is safe ; his life was nobly spent,
And it is well. Oh, draw Thou near,
Light my bewilderment,
Make me content !



TRUE.



HE fair, frail blooms which loved the
sun

Grew faint at touch of cold,

And, chilled and pale, fell one by one

Dead in the dust and mould.

But here, where down the dim, wet walks

The sere leaves whirl and beat,

One rose looks through the bare brown stalks,

And charms the air with sweet.

As one brave heart, when all the truth

On earth seems dead or last,

Still keeps the faith and fire of youth,

And smiles in spite of past.


Ah, though the friends I once held dear

Are far, or false, or flown,

I need not grieve, for *you* are here,

My hope, my love, my own!

BROKEN FAITH.

UDS on the apple-boughs,
And robins in every tree ;
Brown on the children's sun-kissed brows,
A softer blue on the tender sea,
Ah me !

Bees in the maples murmuring,
Brooks on the hillsides ; — and yet, O Spring,
Thou hast broken thy faith with me !

Broken thy faith with me,
Who have pined for thee so long, —
Waiting and waiting patiently
Through all the Winter's cruel wrong,
Ah me !

Climbing the rugged, desolate hills
To watch the sky for the faintest thrills
Of the azure yet to be.

Violets sweeten the woods
And purple the river-sides,

While deep in the shady solitudes

The last sweet bud of the arbutus hides,

Ah me!

And the treacherous honey-bee stays his wing

To wrong its sweetness; — but yet, O Spring,

Thou hast broken thy faith with me!

Never a bud is seen

Within my garden walls, —

Never a touch of sprouting green;

And the fitful sunlight faintly falls,

Ah me!

On broken trellis and leafless vine,

Where last year's tendrils bleach and pine,

With blackened stems between.

June will be here anon,

Flushing the smiling skies,

Putting her bravest garments on,

Flaunting her roses in homesick eyes,

Ah me!

Which will not smile at the thoughts they bring,

Or weep when they wither; — for thou, O Spring,

Hast broken thy faith with me!

IN WASHINGTON.



THE burning sunbeams on the pavement
beat,

There is no pity in the brazen skies ;

The air along the street quivers with scorching
heat,

And its hot dazzle blinds the aching eyes.

In these long days, with dust and turmoil rife,

The sultry distance of the Avenue

Seems like some dreary life, full of unrest and strife,

Where there comes never either bloom or dew.

She sits there in the sunshine all the day,

Almost beneath the passers' hurrying feet, —

A woman, old and gray, beside the crowded way,

Blinded and choked with dust, and faint with
heat.

A few poor matches in her basket lie,

Half hidden by her tattered garment's fold ;

She waits there patiently, but no one stops to buy,
And her small merchandise remains unsold.

Her eyes are fixed upon the stunted grass,
Browned by the sunshine, in the dusty square,
While youth and beauty pass, but give no thought,
alas !

To her who once was also young and fair.

In her now faded hair were golden gleams,
And youth shone on her forehead like a crown ; —
Ah, how remote it seems, that time of joyous
dreams,

Far from the hot streets of this tedious town !

Sometimes, I fancy, in her dull despair,
Across her thought this pleasant memory slips ;
Once, as I passed her there, a sweet, old-fashioned air
Quavered in broken treble from her lips.

No matter whose rich skirts against her blow,
She never speaks, or turns her head, or stirs ;
Oh, flutterers to and fro, what can your gay hearts
know

Of such an empty, hopeless life as hers ?

She sees you, blessed with all that fortune brings,
Shake from your dainty robes the perfumed airs ;
She sees white hands, and rings, and gems, and
precious things,
And smiling eyes. I wonder if she cares ?

Silent she sits, her chin upon her knees,
While proud and happy crowds go sweeping by ;
I wonder, when she sees such differences as these,
If her sad soul rebels and queries, " Why ? "

What thoughts may pain her heart, so lone and
drear,
Who knows ? — But though I never heard her
speak,
Once, as I came more near, I thought I saw a tear
Lost in the mazy wrinkles of her cheek.

But if there be a law of recompense,
Which rights all wrongs, and gives us back our
own,
In some sweet realm far hence, where toil and tur-
bulence
Dwell not, and age and sorrow are unknown,

There she, with all her earthly troubles told,
And freed from all this weight of want and care,
No longer wan and old, and poor and unconsolated,
Shall be a radiant angel, young and fair.

And if, enfranchised from this dreary maze,
I, too, shall come into that rest serene,
And meet her, as she strays along the pleasant
ways
Amid the waters still and pastures green,

Dowered with the deathless youth of Paradise,
I wonder if my memory will be true, —
If, looking in her eyes, my own will recognize
The Old Match-vender of the Avenue?



TIME.



DOU see the tree that sweeps my window-
pane ?

All the long winter-time it moans
and grieves ;

In the bleak nights I hear its boughs complain,
Praying for gracious sunshine and warm rain,
And its withheld inheritance of leaves.

But what avails it ? Though the sad tree wears
Its heart out with its grief, what shall it
gain ?

Do you believe the tardy summer cares
For all its wild rebukes and passionate prayers,
Or that the sun shines warmer for its pain ?

Verily not. No pleader can prevail

Who prays against the laws of Time or Fate :
No matter how we murmur and bewail,
The robins will not build in winter hail,
Nor lilacs blow in February. Wait !

Have faith, my friend. And when these stormy
glooms

Have chastened us for June, come here again,
And you shall see my tree made glad with blooms,
Its branches all a-toss with purple plumes

Sweeping across this selfsame window-pane !



BABYHOOD.



BABY, with your marvellous eyes,
Clear as the yet unfallen dew,
Methinks you are the only wise, —
No change can touch you with surprise, —
Nothing is strange or new to you.

You did not weep, when faint and weak
Grew Love's dear hand within your hold,
And, when I pressed your living cheek
Close down to lips which could not speak,
You did not start to find them cold.

You think it morning when you wake,
That night comes when your eyelids fall,
That the winds blow, and blossoms shake,
And the sun shines for your small sake ;
And, queen-like, you accept it all.

O you are wise ! you comprehend
What my slow sense may not divine, —

The sparrow is your fearless friend,
And even these pine-tassels bend
 More fondly to your cheek than mine.

When in the summer woods we walk,
 All shy, sweet things commune with you :
You understand the robin's talk ;
And when a flower bends its stalk,
 You answer it with nod and coo.

Sometimes, with playful prank and wile,
 As seeing what I cannot see,
You look into the air, and smile,
And murmur softly all the while
 To one who speaks no word to me.

Is it because your sacred youth
 Is free from touch of time or toil ?
I cannot tell ; — perhaps, in sooth,
Clean hands may grasp the fair white truth
 Withheld from mine through fear of soil.

I guard you with a needless care,
 O child, so sinlessly secure !

I see that even now you wear
A dawning glory in your hair, —
And fittingly, for you are pure :

Pure to the heart's unsullied core,
As, conscious of its spotless trust,
The lily's temple is, before
The bee profanes its marble floor,
Leaving a track of golden dust.

O, shield me with your light caress,
Dear heart, so stainless and so new !
Unconscious of your loveliness,
Your beauty, fresh and shadowless,
As is a violet of its blue.

Perhaps through death our souls may gain
Your perfect peace, your holy rest.
Life has not vexed us all in vain,
If, after all this woe and pain,
We may be blessed babes again,
Cradled on Love's immortal breast !

GOING TO SLEEP.



HE light is fading down the sky,
The shadows grow and multiply ;
I hear the thrushes' evening song :
But I have borne with toil and wrong
So long, so long !

Dim dreams my drowsy senses drown, —
So, darling, kiss my eyelids down !

My life's brief spring went wasted by,
My summer ended fruitlessly ;
I learned to hunger, strive, and wait :
I found you, love, — O happy fate ! —
So late, so late !

Now all my fields are turning brown, —
So, darling, kiss my eyelids down !

O blessed sleep ! O perfect rest !
Thus pillowed on your faithful breast,

Nor life nor death is wholly drear,
O tender heart, since you are here, —
So dear, so dear !

Sweet love ! my soul's sufficient crown !
Now, darling, kiss my eyelids down !



LEFT BEHIND.



It was the autumn of the year!
 The strawberry-leaves were red and
 sere,

October's airs were fresh and chill,
 When, pausing on the windy hill,
 The hill that overlooks the sea,
 You talked confidingly to me, —
 Me, whom your keen artistic sight
 Has not yet learned to read aright,
 Since I have veiled my heart from you,
 And loved you better than you knew.

You told me of your toilsome past,
 The tardy honors won at last,
 The trials borne, the conquests gained,
 The longed-for boon of Fame attained:
 I knew that every victory
 But lifted you away from me, —
 That every step of high emprise
 But left me lowlier in your eyes:

I watched the distance as it grew,
And loved you better than you knew.

You did not see the bitter trace
Of anguish sweep across my face ;
You did not hear my proud heart beat
Heavy and slow beneath your feet :
You thought of triumphs still unwon,
Of glorious deeds as yet undone ;
And I, the while you talked to me,
I watched the gulls float lonesomely
Till lost amid the hungry blue,
And loved you better than you knew.

You walk the sunny side of Fate ;
The wise world smiles, and calls you great ;
The golden fruitage of success
Drops at your feet in plenteousness ;
And you have blessings manifold, —
Renown and power, and friends and gold.
They build a wall between us twain
Which may not be thrown down again.
Alas ! for I, the long years through,
Have loved you better than you knew.

Your life's proud aim, your art's high truth,
Have kept the promise of your youth ;
And while you won the crown which now
Breaks into bloom upon your brow,
My soul cried strongly out to you
Across the ocean's yearning blue,
While, unremembered and afar,
I watched you, as I watch a star
Through darkness struggling into view,
And loved you better than you knew.

I used to dream, in all these years
Of patient faith and silent tears,
That Love's strong hand would put aside
The barriers of place and pride, —
Would reach the pathless darkness through
And draw me softly up to you.
Perchance the violets o'er my dust
Will half betray their buried trust,
And say, their blue eyes full of dew,
“ She loved you better than you knew.”

THE DREAM,

A BUST SEEN IN THE STUDIO OF AN ARTIST
AT ROME.



SUMMER night in Rome, —
Dear Rome, of Art and Song and Love
the home!

An eve of rare delight, —

A murmuring, soft, immeasurable night,

A summer night in Rome!

No frigid Northern skies

Chill us from far, mocking our longing eyes

And yearning sympathies; —

Ah, no! the heaven bends kind and clasping here,

And in the ether clear

The stars seem warm and near.

This is the Artist's room,

Hushed in its purple gloom, —

The dim birth-chamber of his vital thought,

Which, into marble wrought,
Asserts sublime and beautiful control, —
 Charming the raptured sight,
Hushing the world in wondering delight,
 Touching the fainting soul,
Fettered and cramped by sin and grief and strife,
 To newer, holier life.

Pulsing along the air,
A strange and sacred presence seems to fill
 The studio dark and still ;
 Dark, — saving only where
Through the broad window, with a wondrous
 glow
Of golden light, unhindered in its flow,
 Looks in the mellow moon,
 The bright Italian moon ; —
 Still, save the tremor light
Which the thick vines yield to the wooing night,
 And the soul-soothing tune
Breathing among the distant olive-trees,
Where bland airs sing their dreamful sympho-
 nies,
 Their chants of love and June.

Behold! a vision there,
Where the slant moonlight floods the fragrant air,—
A dreaming marble face
Exquisite in its grace,
Gentle and young and fair,
Amid its luminous waves of flowing hair;
A brow with earnest meaning softly fraught,
Bowed in a trance of thought,
As though, enraptured by some vision rare,
Some picture in the air,
The musing eyes see what is else unseen;
And while it lingers there,
The beautiful lips serene
Seem parting unaware
To utter softly, "*Stay! thou art so fair!*"

This is the Artist's Dream,
This sweet and noble face. Does it not seem
A word might break the charm, —
Might startle the dropped lids with quick alarm,
Might wake warm color in the snowy cheek
And make the Dreamer speak?

Nay, breathe more softly, — hush!
Did not the rare lips move?

Pygmalion trembled when the rosy flush
Of conscious being thrilled his marble love ;
 I dare not stay to prove
If I am stronger. So, farewell to thee,
Most dainty Dream ! The Artist will not see
That thou hast lost by giving unto me
 A beautiful memory,
 A joy forevermore !

Now close the studio door,
And leave the haunted room
To all pure spirits dear ;
Leave not a footprint on the sacred floor,
Wake not the echoes in the classic gloom ;
 The Artist's soul is here,
Where in the eloquent silence, strange and dim,
His beautiful creations wait for him !



ENDURANCE.



HOW much the heart may bear, and yet
not break !

How much the flesh may suffer, and
not die !

I question much if any pain or ache

Of soul or body brings our end more nigh :
Death chooses his own time ; till that is sworn,
All evils may be borne.

We shrink and shudder at the surgeon's knife,

Each nerve recoiling from the cruel steel
Whose edge seems searching for the quivering
life,

Yet to our sense the bitter pangs reveal,
That still, although the trembling flesh be torn,
This also can be borne.

We see a sorrow rising in our way,

And try to flee from the approaching ill ;
We seek some small escape ; we weep and pray ;

But when the blow falls, then our hearts are
still ;

Not that the pain is of its sharpness shorn,
But that it can be borne.

We wind our life about another life ;

We hold it closer, dearer than our own :
Anon it faints and fails in deathly strife,

Leaving us stunned, and stricken, and alone ;
But ah ! we do not die with those we mourn, —
This also can be borne.

Behold, we live through all things, — famine,
thirst,

Bereavement, pain ; all grief and misery,
All woe and sorrow ; life inflicts its worst
On soul and body, — but we cannot die.
Though we be sick, and tired, and faint, and
worn, —
Lo, all things can be borne !

THE SPARROW AT SEA.



AGAINST the baffling winds, with slow
advance,
One drear December day,
Up the vexed Channel, toward the coast of France,
Our vessel urged her way.

Around the dim horizon's misty slopes
The storm its banners hung ;
And, pulling bravely at the heavy ropes,
The dripping sailors sung.

A little land-bird, from its home-nest warm,
Bewildered, driven, and lost,
With wearied wings, came drifting on the storm,
From the far English coast.

Blown blindly onward, with a headlong speed
It could not guide or check,
Seeking some shelter in its utter need,
It dropped upon the deck.

Forgetting all its dread of human foes,
Desiring only rest,
It folded its weak wings, and nestled close
And gladly to my breast.

Wherefore, I said, this little flickering life,
Which now all panting lies,
Shall yet forget its peril and its strife,
And soar in sunny skies.

To-morrow, gaining England's shore again,
Its wings shall find their rest ;
And soon, among the leaves of some green lane,
Brood o'er a summer nest.

And when, amid my future wanderings,
My far and devious quest,
I hear a warbling bird, whose carol rings
More sweetly than the rest, —

Then I shall say, with heart awake and warm,
And sudden sympathy,
“ It is the bird I sheltered in the storm,
The life I saved at sea ! ”

But when the morning fell across the ship,
And storm and cloud were fled,
The golden beak no longer sought my lip, —
The wearied bird was dead.

The bitter cold, the driving wind and rain,
Were borne too many hours ;
My pity came too late : and all in vain
Sunshine on frozen flowers.

Thus many a heart which dwells in grief and
tears,
Braving and suffering much,
Bears patiently the wrong and pain of years,
But breaks at Love's first touch !



WHITE HEAD.



FROM the pleasant paths I used to tread
Full many a mile away,
I dream of the rocks of old White
Head,

And the billows of Casco Bay.
I sit once more on the island beach,
Where the waves dash glad and high,
And listen again their mystic speech,
As the murmurous ranks go by ;
While, lying here on my tiresome bed,
I cheat the dreary day
By fondly picturing old White Head
And the waters of Casco Bay.

Beyond it the laden ships go out,
Out into the open sea,
To battle with danger, and storm, and doubt,
And the ocean's treachery ;
And the homeward vessels which long have sped
Through tempest, and spray, and foam,

Catch first a glimmer of old White Head,
And are sure they are almost home ;
And many a homesick tear is shed
By wanderers miles away,
As memory whispers of old White Head,
And the islands of Casco Bay,

Ah, rarest mosses that ever were seen
Grow brightly on old White Head ;
Orange, and russet, and emerald green
Wide over the rocks are spread ;
And when the sweet June sunlight shines,
The gossiping zephyr tells
Where ruby and golden columbines
Are swinging their myriad bells.
Ah, thus, as I lie on my tiresome bed,
I cheat the dreary day
By summer pictures of old White Head,
And the billows of Casco Bay.

Did I forget ? It is winter now
On the islands and old White Head.
The snow lies deep on the cliff's high brow,
And the lichens and blooms are dead ;

Under the ice, with sob and sigh,
The prisoned billows heave,
And the clouds hang dark, and the sea-birds cry,
And the winds complain and grieve, —
Yet, lying here on my tiresome bed,
It cheers me to think alway
That the summer is shining on old White Head,
And the islands of Casco Bay!



LOVED TOO LATE.



FAR off in the dim and desolate Past, —
 That shoreless and sorrowful sea
 Where wrecks are driven by wave and
 blast,

Shattered, sunken, and lost, at last,

Lies the heart that was broken for me, —

Poor heart!

Long ago broken for me!

My loves were Glory and Pride and Art, —

Ah, dangerous rivals three!

Sweet lips might quiver and warm tears start:

Should an artist pause for a woman's heart, —

Even that which was broken for me?

Poor heart!

Too rare to be broken for me!

O, she was more mild than the summer wind,

More fair than the lilies be;

More true than the star with twilight twinned

Was the spirit against whose love I sinned, —

The heart that was broken for me, —
 Poor heart !
Cruelly broken for me !

I told her an artist should wed his art, —
 That only his love should be ;
No other should lure me from mine apart,
I said ; and my cold words chilled her heart,
 The heart that was breaking for me, —
 Poor heart !
 Hopelessly breaking for me !

I spoke of the beautiful years to come,
 In the lands beyond the sea, —
Those years which must be so wearisome
To her ; but her patient lips were dumb :
 In silence it broke for me, —
 Poor heart !
 Broke, yet complained not, for me !

I pressed her hand, and rebuked her tears
 Lightly and carelessly ;
I said my triumphs should reach her ears,
And left her alone with the dismal years

And the heart that was breaking for me, —

Poor heart!

Silently breaking for me!

My days were a dream of summer-time,

My life was a victory;

Fame wove bright garlands to crown my prime,

And I half forgot, in that radiant clime,

The heart that was breaking for me, —

Poor heart!

Patiently breaking for me!

But my whole life seemed, as the swift years rolled,

More hollow and vain to be:

Fame's bosom, at best, is hard and cold —

Oh, I would have given all praise and gold

For the heart that was broken for me, —

Poor heart!

Thanklessly broken for me!

Sick with longing, and hope, and dread,

I hurried across the sea;

She had wasted as though with grief, they said, —

Poor child, poor child! — and was long since

dead; —

Ah! dead for the love of me,
 Poor heart!
Broken, and vainly, for me!

Weighed down by a woe too heavy to hold,
 She died unmurmuringly ;
And I, remorseful and unconsolated,
I dream of the wasted days of old,
 And the heart that was broken for me, —
 Poor heart!
Broken so vainly for me!

And my soul cries out in its bitter pain
 For the bliss that cannot be, —
For the love that never can come again,
For the sweet young life that was lived in vain,
 And the heart that was broken for me, —
 Poor heart!
Broken and buried for me!



SINGING IN THE RAIN.



HERE the elm-tree branches by the rain
are stirred,
Careless of the shower, swings a little
bird :

Clouds may frown and darken, drops may fall
in vain ;—

Little heeds the warbler singing in the rain !

Silence soft, unbroken, reigneth everywhere, —
Save the rain's low heart-throbs pulsing on the
air, —

Save the song, which, pausing, wins no answer-
ing strain ;—

Little cares the robin singing in the rain !

Not yet are the orchards rich with rosy snow,
Nor with dandelions are the fields aglow ;

Yet almost my fancy in his song's sweet flow
Hears the June leaves whisper, and the roses
blow !

Dimmer fall the shadows, mistier grows the air, —
Still the thick clouds gather, darkening here and
there.

From their heavy fringes pour the drops amain ;
Still the bird is swinging, singing in the rain.

O thou hopeful singer, whom my faith perceives
To a dove transfigured bringing olive-leaves, —
Olive-leaves of promise, types of joy to be ; —
How, in doubt and trial, learns my heart of
thee !

Cheerful summer prophet ! listening to thy song,
How my fainting spirit groweth glad and strong.
Let the black clouds gather, let the sunshine
wane,
If I may but join thee singing in the rain !



THEN.



LEAN my aching forehead on my
palms,

And think how it will be another
year,

When May, with passionate showers and sunny
calms,

Will walk this way, and I shall not be here.

The city will not miss me : I have been

Only a step-child of its dust and noise ;

Longing and homesick, in its strife and din,

For the green country and its quiet joys.

Threading its wilderness of crowded streets,

How have I longed for rural summer-tides, —

For tangled wood-paths, full of dewy sweets,

And cool green ways by murmuring river-sides !

These alien souls will never miss the face,

Tear-stained sometimes, and sometimes summer-
fair,

Which came and went among them for a space,
And then was gone, — and no one wondered
where.

But thou, who wanderest distant lands across,
How will thy heart, O tender and most dear,
Ache with a sudden sense of bitter loss
When thou returnest and I am not here!



AN AUTUMN VIOLET.



HE wind shrieks in shrill discontent,
The clouds frown their pitiless warn-
ing,

With frost-pearls the ground is besprent
This dreary and sorrowful morning.
Yet here, dreading not the bleak day,
Nor the cold sky so frigidly glooming,
Is a ghost of the long-buried May, —
A violet, sweet and fresh-blooming!

Ah, the days may be sullen and sober,
The nights may be stormy and cold;
But, for him who has eyes to behold,
The violets bloom in October!

Poor foundling! thy welcome is cold, —
Granted after a merciless fashion;
For the year has grown fretful and old,
And knows neither love nor compassion.
Oh, of all the misfortunes which here
Make life so oppressive and weary,

To be born at the wrong time of year
Is surely most lonesome and dreary !

Ah, the morn may be solemn and sober,
And sombre and cheerless the eve,
But, for those who have souls to perceive,
The violets bloom in October !

Lift up thine unfearing blue eye,
O brave but mistaken new-comer,
And tell, while the snow-flakes blow by,
What wandering sprite of the summer,
Betrayed by some bright autumn day
Whose treachery all should remember,
Has left thee, in fear and dismay,
On the door-step of cruel November ?

O, the days may be sullen and sober,
The nights may be windy and cold,
But, for him who has eyes to behold,
The violets bloom in October !

THE MOUNTAINS.



SITTING alone in this silent room,
Blinded with weeping, and sick and
strange,

I see it, whitening out of the gloom,
A chill and sorrowful mountain range.

Never o'er summit or sweep or slope
A gleam of gladness or pleasure thrills,
Never a glimmer of joy or hope
Blesses or brightens these desolate hills.

All the winds which over them blow
Are sighs too bitter to brook control,
And all the freshening rains they know
Are hot tears wrung from a stricken soul.

First is a pallid, smileless Face,
Turned forever away from tears ;
Then two pale Hands, which will keep their place,
Folded from labor through all the years ;

Then the Knees, which will never bow,
Never bend or obey again ;
And then the motionless Feet, which now
Are done with walking in sun and rain.

These are the mountains ; and over all
Sinks and settles the winding-sheet,
Following sharply each rise and fall
From the pallid face to the quiet feet.

These are the mountains which through the gloom
Rising whitely and cold I see,
Sloping into the shadowy tomb, —
The mournful hills of mortality.

And of all the dear ones whose souls have crossed
These terrible summits in fear and pain,
We only know they are gone and lost,
And never return to our arms again.

So we wander and grope in our earthly clime,
Fettered and cramped by this mortal bond,
Watching the mountains from time to time,
And questioning vainly the dim beyond.

A SPRING LOVE-SONG.



THE earth is waking at the voice of May,
The new grass brightens by the trodden way,

The woods wave welcome to the sweet spring day,
And the sea is growing summer blue ;
But fairer, sweeter than the smiling sky,
Or bashful violet with tender eye,
Is she whose love for me will never die, —
I love you, darling, only you !

O, friendships falter when misfortunes frown,
The blossoms vanish when the leaves turn brown,
The shells lie stranded when the tide goes down,
But you, dear heart, are ever true.

The grass grows greenest when the rain-drops fall,
The vine clasps closest to the crumbling wall, —
So love blooms sweetest under sorrow's thrall, —
I love you, darling, only you !

The early robin may forget to sing,
The loving mosses may refuse to cling,

Or the brook to tinkle at the call of spring,

But you, dear heart, are ever true.

Let the silver mingle with your curls of gold,

Let the years grow dreary and the world wax old,

But the love I bear for you will ne'er grow cold, —

I love you, darling, only you !



THE AMBER ROSARY.



Y birthday! I must keep it, as of old,
 And wear some token of a holiday;
 For see the woods are gay with red and
 gold,

And Autumn sings her merriest roundelay.

I have no heart for dainty robes to-day,
 And flowers do not suit me any more;
 So, from the darkness where it hides away,
 I take this relic of the days of yore, —

Only an antique amber rosary,
 Whose beads still hold the mellow light of
 Rome,

Clasped by a cross of blackest ebony,
 Fashioned by loving fingers here at home.

And as I lift again the chain and cross,
 The bright beads seem a wreath of golden days,
 Ended too soon by black and bitter loss,
 Made gloomier still by their contrasting rays.

O, liquidly the sunlight filters through
These shining spheres of warm translucent gold,
Changing to drops of rich and wondrous hue,
Like precious wine of vintage rare and old.

Ah me! this rosary, in other lands,
Has learned more prayers than I shall ever
know, —
Its slow beads slipped and smoothed by pious hands,
Whose pulses stopped a hundred years ago.

It keeps an odor mystical and dim,
As of old churches, where the censer swings, —
Where, listening to the echo-chanted hymn,
The sculptured angels fold their marble wings.

Where through the windows melts the unwilling
light,
And in its passage learns their gorgeous stain,
Then bars the gloom with rays all rainbow-bright,
As human souls grow beautiful through pain.

One birthday, — it might be a year ago,
Or fifty, or a thousand, — one who smiled

Counted these beads, and praised their marvellous
glow,

Saying, "I bring a gift to you, dear child, —

"An amulet, not made of gems or gold,

But drops of light, imprisoned from above.

Gold were too heavy; gems, too hard and cold;

And only amber suits the soul of love.

"What fitter birthday token could I give?

See how the clear orbs answer to the sun!

I clasp them at your throat, and you shall live

A perfect golden year for every one!"

"Then why the cross?" I asked. He sighed and
said,

"For possible sorrows." Ah, these useless tears!

The hand which placed it here, now cold and dead,

Forgets to twine for me the golden years.

Forgets to bless her waiting head, who wears

For his dear sake these amber beads to-day, —

Forgets to make the cruel cross she bears

Grow lighter as the birthdays wear away.

Yet still the amber gleams, and unawares
Turns all to gold beneath its mellow ray ;
O pure hearts, glowing with remembered prayers,
Plead for her peace who has no heart to pray !



OUR SOLDIERS.



OTHER, with your fond heart south-
ward turning,
And your face so full of anxious yearning, —

By the sorrow in your deep eyes growing,
Well I know where all your thoughts are going.

To the brave, bright boy, all danger scorning,
Gone to battle in his youth's fresh morning, —
For his country's bitter need, defying
Pain and hardship, and the dread of dying.

Fair young girl, whose startled heart beats faster
At the news of triumph or disaster, —
Ah! the word *you* whisper softly over,
Is the dear name of your valiant lover.

In the army where our banners hover,
I have neither brother, son, nor lover :
Round what camp-fire shall my thought be straying?
Whom shall I remember in my praying ?

O we lonesome ones, who linger over
No dear name of brother, son, or lover, —
Still our hearts ache, and our tear-drops fall ·
Others pray for *one*, — we pray for *all*!



GOOD BY.



THE wind blows freshly out to sea,
The white sails flutter unconfined ;
One word to those I leave behind,
And I will go unfalteringly.

Good by !

Thus cheerful let our parting be !

I go to sunnier lands than this,
Where all things fair and radiant seem, —
Where I shall walk as in a dream
Of nature's rarest perfectness.

Good by !

There breath is balm, and life is bliss !

Yet shall I almost grieve, that there,
In that most rare and glorious clime,
I lose our Northern winter-time,
Whitening with snow-flakes all the air.

Good by !

You will behold it, white and fair !

When stern December chills the sea,
And, by the mighty winds led forth,
The storms come hurrying from the north,
I know how you will think of me.

Good by!

How lost and distant I shall be!

Seen from my dear old window there,
How the white gusts will drive and whirl!
And, crusting all the walls with pearl,
The sleet come slanting through the air.

Good by!

Then I shall be far otherwhere!

But, though I linger long away,
I know the few who prize my name
Will trust and love me all the same,
And hold me as they do to-day.

Good by!

Say it not mournfully, I pray!

And if, in wrath and treachery,
The ocean from its trust departs,

Bury me softly in your hearts
Forever. — But I shall not die.

Good by!

Love me, and pray for me. Good by!



FORESHADOWING.



KNOW, my friend,

We never have been lovers ; but when
we

Of these sweet summer-hours shall find the end,
And there shall be

A courteous close to all our pleasant speech, —

When you go out into the hurrying crowd,
To battle, like a warrior iron-browed,

For all the worldly blessings which you claim, —

Wealth, power, and fame, —

Things which I do not crave and cannot reach, —

I wonder if your heart will be the same, —

Will beat as evenly and tranquilly,

Away from me ?

If, when you find your separate life once more,

'T will be as whole and happy as before ?

It may be so :

Ambition has broad leaves, which overgrow

The feebler heart-plants, blossoming small and low ;

And yet, I think,
When time, or change, or both, have snapped the
link
Which holds us now so lightly heart to heart ;
When you have found out new and pleasant ways,
From these apart ;
Have loved fair women, and have known great
men, —
Perhaps grown great yourself, and tasted praise, —
Despite the rosy ties which bind you then,
You will look back to these tame, quiet days,
With dim, strange pain ;
And haply in your dreaming, think of me,
Half mournfully,
Saying, — while all surrounding witcheries
Seem dull and vain,
And Beauty's smile and Flattery's ministries
Lose, for the time, their hold on heart and brain, —
“ Ah me ! how little she was like to these !
Would I could look upon her face again ! ”

'T is all I crave,
This one regretful thought. I ask no more, —
And you will yield it ere you shall be old, —

Though not before
The opulent dandelion's rounds of gold
Shall brightly pave
The sunny footway leading to my grave.



THE CLAY-CHILD.



WHEN the footsteps of the New

On the Old were pressing,

One who knew my life to be

Aching for a blessing

Gave the Clay-child, sleeping here,

To my fond caressing.

Clipping first the folded wings

Crossed its round throat under,

Lest, grown weary of my care,

It might choose to wander

Back into the purple light

Of the far heaven yonder.

Saying, "In the nurture true

Of your soul-love rear it;

Let no rude or evil thing

Ever linger near it;

Keep as now its perfectness

Pure, in face and spirit."

So I took it to my heart
 With a mother's yearning,
Loving it with heart and eyes,
 Asking no returning, —
Loving it with many tears,
 Yet no answer earning.

Born of Peace, for which my soul
 Pineth, all ungifted,
Never are thy drooping lids
 O my Clay-child, lifted, —
Never is the mystic veil
 Which divides us rifted.

Wherefore, though my prayerful knee
 Never may be bended,
Thou shalt be my silent prayer, —
 Prayer with patience blended.
Through *thy* lips I ask *thy* peace,
 Perfect, heaven-descended !

LOST LIGHT.



MY heart is chilled and my pulse is slow,
But often and often will memory go,
Like a blind child lost in a waste of
snow,

Back to the days when I loved you so, —
The beautiful long ago.

I sit here, dreaming them through and through,
The blissful moments I shared with you, —
The sweet, sweet days when our love was
new,
When I was trustful and you were true, —
Beautiful days, but few.

Blest or wretched, fettered or free,
Why should I care how your life may be,
Or whether you wander by land or sea?
I only know you are dead to me,
Ever and hopelessly.

O, how often at day's decline,
I pushed from my window the curtaining vine,
 To see from your lattice the lamplight shine,—
 Type of a message that, half divine,
 Flashed from your heart to mine.

Once more the starlight is silvering all ;
The roses sleep by the garden wall,
 The night-bird warbles his madrigal,
 And I hear again through the sweet air fall
 The evening bugle-call.

But summers will vanish and years will wane,
And bring no light to your window-pane ;
 Nor gracious sunshine nor patient rain,
 Can bring dead love back to life again :
 I call up the past in vain.

My heart is heavy, my heart is old,
And that proves dross which I counted gold ;
 I watch no longer your curtain's fold,
 The window is dark and the night is cold,
 And the story forever told.

THE CITY OF THE LIVING.



IN a long-vanished age, whose varied
story

No record has to-day, —

So long ago expired its grief and glory, —

There flourished, far away,

In a broad realm, whose beauty passed all meas-
ure,

A city fair and wide,

Wherein the dwellers lived in peace and pleasure,

And never any died.

Disease and pain and death, those stern marau-
ders,

Which mar our world's fair face,

Never encroached upon the pleasant borders

Of that bright dwelling-place.

No fear of parting and no dread of dying

Could ever enter there ;

No mourning for the lost, no anguished crying
Made any face less fair.

Without the city's walls death reigned as ever,
And graves rose side by side;
Within, the dwellers laughed at his endeavor,
And never any died.

O happiest of all earth's favored places!
O bliss, to dwell therein! —
To live in the sweet light of loving faces,
And fear no grave between!

To feel no death-damp, gathering cold and colder,
Disputing life's warm truth, —
To live on, never lonelier or older,
Radiant in deathless youth!

And hurrying from the world's remotest quarters
A tide of pilgrims flowed
Across broad plains and over mighty waters,
To find that blest abode,

Where never death should come between, and sever
Them from their loved apart, —

Where they might work, and win, and live for-
ever,

Still holding heart to heart.

And so they lived, in happiness and pleasure,

And grew in power and pride,

And did great deeds, and laid up stores of treas-
ure,

And never any died.

And many years rolled on, and saw them striving

With unabated breath ;

And other years still found and left them living,

And gave no hope of death.

Yet listen, hapless soul whom angels pity,

Craving a boon like this, —

Mark how the dwellers in the wondrous city

Grew weary of their bliss.

One and another, who had been concealing

The pain of life's long thrall,

Forsook their pleasant places, and came stealing

Outside the city wall,

Craving, with wish that brooked no more denying,
So long had it been crossed,
The blessed possibility of dying, —
The treasure they had lost.

Daily the current of rest-seeking mortals
Swelled to a broader tide,
Till none were left within the city's portals,
And graves grew green outside.

Would it be worth the having or the giving,
The boon of endless breath?
Ah, for the weariness that comes of living
There is no cure but death!

Ours were indeed a fate deserving pity,
Were that sweet rest denied;
And few, methinks, would care to find the city
Where never any died!



OCTOBER.



THE door-yard trees put on their autumn
bloom,
Purple and gold and crimson rich and
strong,

That stain the light, and give my lonesome room
An atmosphere of sunset all day long:

In giddy whirls the yellow elm-leaves fall,
The rifled cherry-boughs grow sere and thinned,
Yet still the morning-glories on the wall
Fling out their purple trumpets to the wind, —

So full but now of summer's triumph-notes,
The moth's soft wing their powdery stamens
stirred,
The bees rich murmur filled their honeyed throats,
And the quick thrilling of the humming-bird.

In the long dreary nights of storm I hear
The windy woodbine beat against the pane,

Trembling and shuddering with cold and fear,
Like one who seeks a shelter all in vain.

The sobbing rain deplores the sad decline
Of all which erst was fair and sweet and young,
The tender fingers of the clambering vine
Are bruised against the trellis where they clung.

Thus is my world dismantled, cold and bare ;
The winter threatens, lowering and drear ; —
Where are the pattering feet, the shining hair,
The eyes which made it always summer here ?



AT LAST.



At last, when all the summer shine
 That warmed life's early hours is past,
 Your loving fingers seek for mine

And hold them close — at last — at last!

Not oft the robin comes to build

Its nest upon the leafless bough

By autumn robbed, by winter chilled, —

But you, dear heart, you love me now.

Though there are shadows on my brow

And furrows on my cheek, in truth, —

The marks where Time's remorseless plough

Broke up the blooming sward of Youth, —

Though fled is every girlish grace

Might win or hold a lover's vow,

Despite my sad and faded face,

And darkened heart, you love me now!

I count no more my wasted tears;

They left no echo of their fall;

I mourn no more my lonesome years ;
 This blessed hour atones for all.
I fear not all that Time or Fate
 May bring to burden heart or brow, —
Strong in the love that came so late,
 Our souls shall keep it always *now!*



LITTLE LOSSES.



WHO misses a drop from the shower ?

Who mourns a leaf lost from the tree ?

Who weeps, when the woods are in flower,

If one broken blossom there be ?

Then, dear one, why cling so to me ?

The wind shakes the shining dew-spangles

Loose out of the grass-tops at morn,

And brushes the silkenest tangles

From all the tossed locks of the corn,

What time the first bird-songs are born ;

And what heart deplores them ? We only

Perceive that no longer they be ;

And surely, *you* cannot be lonely,

Missing out of the world only *me* ?

The whole world is enough, without *me* ?

Who mourns for the tiny brown sparrow

That dies in the thick orchard trees ?

God's world has not yet grown so narrow

That it feels so small losses as these :

Your loss is still smaller, — so peace !

LAST.



FRIEND, whose smile has come to be
 Very precious unto me,
 Though I know I drank not first
 Of your love's bright fountain-burst,
 Yet I grieve not for the past,
 So you only love me last !

Other souls may find their joy
 In the blind love of a boy :
 Give me that which years have tried,
 Disciplined and purified, —
 Such as, braving sun and blast,
 You will bring to me at last !

There are brows more fair than mine,
 Eyes of more bewitching shine,
 Other hearts more fit, in truth,
 For the passion of your youth ;
 But, their transient empire past,
 You will surely love me last !

Wing away your summer-time,
Find a love in every clime,
 Roam in liberty and light, —
 I shall never stay your flight ;
For I know, when all is past,
You will come to me at last !

Change and flutter as you will,
I shall smile securely still ;
 Patiently I trust and wait
 Though you tarry long and late ;
Prize your spring till it be past,
Only, only love me last !



THISTLES.



YOU know how we followed this path last
year,

Where the wintry tempests beat?

The snowy landscape was sad and drear,
The sea was pallid with cold and fear,
The wind was bitter, and far and near
Was sifting the rattling sleet, beloved,
The cruel and pitiless sleet!

But now, dear love, is the summer's reign,
And the thistles wound our feet;
We seek escape from their thorns in vain,
And climb the hillside with toil and pain,
Yet knowing and saying again and again
That thistles are kinder than sleet, beloved,
Thistles are kinder than sleet!

GERTRUDIE.



ORN in the shadow of sorrow,
Cradled in mourning and sighs,
Golden hair sprinkled with tear-drops
Rained from her mother's sad eyes, —
Tear-drops more burning and bitter
That they are flowing in vain,
Orphan Gertrudie,
Dear little fatherless baby,
Little bird out in the rain !

Baby ! this world is so cruel
Why should you tempt it ? Beware !
Wring the salt baptism of sorrow
Out of your soft yellow hair,
And, since you wandered from heaven,
Seek the bright pathway again,
Orphan Gertrudie :
Go, ere the angels have missed you ;
Fly away out of the rain !

FORGOTTEN.



IN this dim shadow, where

She found the quiet which all tired
hearts crave,

Now, without grief or care,

The wild bees murmur, and the blossoms wave,

And the forgetful air

Blows heedlessly across her grassy grave.

Yet, when she lived on earth,

She loved this leafy dell, and knew by name

All things of sylvan birth ;

Squirrel and bird chirped welcome, when she
came ;

Yet now, in careless mirth,

They frisk, and build, and warble all the same.

From the great city near,

Wherein she toiled through life's incessant quest

For weary year on year,

Come the far voices of its deep unrest

To touch her dead, deaf ear,
And surge unechoed o'er her pulseless breast.

The hearts which clung to her
Have sought out other shrines, as all hearts must,
When Time, the comforter,
Has worn their grief out, and replaced their trust ;
Not even neglect can stir
This little handful of forgotten dust.

Grass waves, and insects hum,
And then the snow blows bitterly across ;
Strange footsteps go and come,
Breaking the dew-drops on the starry moss ;
She lieth, still and dumb,
Counting no longer either gain or loss.

Ah, well, — 't is better so ;
Let the dust deepen as the years increase ;
Of her who sleeps below
Let the name perish, and the memory cease,
Since she has come to know
That which through life she vainly prayed for, —
Peace !

WATER-LILIES.



DOWN on the lake where the waters
sleep

In a trance of leafy gloom,
Rocked ceaselessly by the lulling swell,
In an endless waste of bloom,
The fair white lilies, the bride-like lilies,
Unbosom their rich perfume.

O lovingly, after the stars go out,
And the silent night is done,
When their morning choruses dear and sweet
The wood-birds have begun,
The fond white lilies, the bride-like lilies,
Look up to their lord, the sun.

And a spell like that which the lotus owns,
Steals over the charmed air,
As, slow unclosing their shining leaves
So wondrously pale and fair,
The rich white lilies, the bride-like lilies,
Their golden hearts lay bare.

White angels of the crystal lake,
Hallowed with purity,
There is never a touch of earthly dust
On their radiant drapery, —
The sweet white lilies, the bride-like lilies,
The fairest flowers that be !



IN AN ATTIC.



HIS is my attic room. Sit down, my friend.

My swallow's nest is high and hard to gain ;

The stairs are long and steep ; but at the end
The rest repays the pain.

For here are peace and freedom ; room for speech
Or silence, as may suit a changeful mood :
Society's hard by-laws do not reach
This lofty altitude.

You hapless dwellers in the lower rooms
See only bricks and sand and windowed walls ;
But here, above the dust and smoky glooms,
Heaven's light unhindered falls.

So early in the street the shadows creep,
Your night begins while yet my eyes behold
The purpling hills, the wide horizon's sweep,
Flooded with sunset gold.

The day comes earlier here. At morn I see
Along the roofs the eldest sunbeam peep ;
I live in daylight, limitless and free,
While you are lost in sleep.

I catch the rustle of the maple-leaves,
I see the breathing branches rise and fall,
And hear, from their high perch along the eaves,
The bright-necked pigeons call.

Far from the parlors with their garrulous crowds
I dwell alone, with little need of words ;
I have mute friendships with the stars and clouds,
And love-trysts with the birds.

So all who walk steep ways, in grief and night,
Where every step is full of toil and pain,
May see, when they have gained the sharpest
height,
It has not been in vain,

Since they have left behind the noise and heat ;
And, though their eyes drop tears, their sight is
clear :

The air is purer, and the breeze is sweet,
And the blue heaven more near.

CASTLES IN SPAIN.



IT down beside me, my love and my
pride,

Ere the stars brighten the sweet even-
tide ;

Clasp in your true hand my fingers again ;
Tell me the tale of our castles in Spain !

Let the proud pass with their grandeur and gold ;
Riches like ours are not purchased or sold ;
Little we care for the greed or the gain, —
We, the possessors of castles in Spain !

Wealth may exult in the pomp it creates, —
Naught the world knows of our foreign estates ;
Little it thinks that, afar o'er the main,
Rise the fair walls of our castles in Spain !

What though our station be low and obscure !
What though we struggle and strive and endure !
What do we care for the wind and the rain ?
They never beat on our castles in Spain !

Sorrows will come to us, ere we are old,
True hearts may leave us, and warm ones grow
cold,

Yet shall we find all our dear ones again,
Fond as of old, in our castles in Spain!

So we are happy, — and when by and by
Under the clover together we lie,
Birds in the branches will sing the refrain,
“Gone to look after their castles in Spain!”



OCTOBER TO MAY.



HE day that brightens half the earth
 Is night to half. Ah, sweet,
 One's mourning is another's mirth, —

You wear your bright years like a crown,
 While mine, dead garlands, tangle down
 In chains about my feet.

The breeze which wakes the folded flower
 Sweeps dead leaves from the tree ;
 So partial Time, as hour by hour
 He tells the rapid years, — eheu ! —
 Brings bloom and beauty still to you,
 But leaves his blight with me.

The sun which calls the violet up
 Out of the moistened mould
 Withers the wind-flower's fragile cup, —
 For even Nature has her pets,
 And favoring the new, forgets
 To love and spare the old.

The shower that makes the bud a rose
 Beats off the lilac bloom ;
I am a lilac ; so life goes ;
A lilac that has outlived May ;
You are a blush-rose : well-a-day !
 I pass, and give you room !



EVENING.



ARK! hear the sleet against the pane,
 And hear the wild winds blow!
 It chills me with a shuddering dread,

This heavy, heaping snow, —
 I cannot bear that all night long
 The drifts should deepen so.

O darling, that this storm should beat
 Upon thy lonesome bed!

O darling, that this drifting snow
 Should heap above thy head,
 And I not there to shelter thee,
 And bear the storm instead!

I trim anew the glowing fire, —
 The flames leap merrily;
 I make the lamplight bright and clear, —
 Thou art not here to see.

Ah, since I sit here all alone
 What are they all to me?

O dreary hearth ! O lonesome life !
O empty heart and home !
It is not home to me, wherein
Thy dear feet never come, —
There is no meaning in the word
Since thy loved lips are dumb !

So, all in vain the bright flames dance,
The ruddy embers glow :
I shiver in the mellow light,
Because, alas, I know
The snow-drifts heap above thy sleep, —
This heavy, heaping snow !



PROPHECY.



HERE 'S a clasp upon my fingers,
 There 's a kiss upon my brow,
 In my ear Love's breathing lingers, —

But, alas, it is not thou !

Since I walk no more with thee,

O, the days have come to be

Dreary, dreary unto me ; —

Best beloved, where art thou ?

In these sweet, prophetic mornings,

When the brown buds load the bough,

And the air brings summer warnings,

All my heart cries, " Where art thou ? "

Still my heart, forevermore

Yearning toward the misty shore,

Keeps repeating o'er and o'er,

" Best beloved, where art thou ? "

When my soul grows faint with pining,

And at death's behest I bow,

On some kindly breast reclining
I shall sigh, "Would it were *thou!*
Unforgotten, dearest, best,
Would that thy most faithful breast
Could have pillowed my last rest, —
O beloved, were it thou!"

Gentle voices breathe around me
Words with fondest meaning blent;
Love's most tender care has crowned me
With all blessings but content;
O the blessed days of old!
O the love too long untold!
O the years so dark and cold,
And their burden, "Were it thou!"



SKELETONS.



FRIENDS, the foot-way is steep and
 rough,
 Harder and wearier day by day,
 Dreary, we murmur, and hard enough
 E'en could we cast these loads away, —
 Terrible burdens, alas! are they.

Skeletons, ghastly and strange and grim, —
 How we shrink from each spectral form!
 Shadows with sad eyes wet and dim,
 Fair young corpses, with lips yet warm, —
 These we carry through shine and storm.

Lying down with them, night by night,
 Rising up with them, morn by morn,
 Bearing their weight through the long daylight,
 Facing them still when the stars are born, —
 O, how weary and how forlorn!

Ah, my neighbor, your face is fair,
 Gay and smiling, the whole day through;

Have you no speechless sorrow there ?
Are there no ghosts to trouble you ?
Do you carry a skeleton, too ?

Softly, softly ! — I do not heed
Any innocent lie you tell.
All whose feet on Life's pathway bleed
Carry their terrible loads as well :
Never one can escape the spell.

Close your eyes, — but you see them still ;
Turn your head, — they are there the same ;
Fly, they follow, go where you will, —
Haunting faces of grief or blame,
More to be feared than sword or flame.

Ghosts of the perished joys of old,
Hopes which once in our hearts abode,
Phantoms of dead loves, stark and cold,
Long since buried on Life's sad road, —
O, a ghastly and fearful load !

Those torment us with sharp rebukes,
These still scourge us with dumb complaint ;

Others stab us with sad sweet looks
From eyes like those of a martyr-saint,
Fire-refined from all mortal taint.

O dear Christ, who didst bow and bleed
Under the burden laid on Thee,
Hear the prayer of our bitter need ;
Though unlightened our loads may be,
Help us to carry them patiently !



A FANTASY.



N the low wall of my chamber, where
the moonbeams fall most brightly,
Mingling with the struggling firelight
in a soft, uncertain strife,

Hangs a dear familiar picture, which I sit and
gaze at nightly,

Till it seems no more a painting, but a form
instinct with life.

'T is the face of one who early by life's rugged
wayside fainted,

And above whose lonesome grave-mound are my
bitterest tear-drops shed, —

One who often haunts my dreaming, with her face
serene and sainted,

With her bright lips uttering blessings, and a
glory round her head.

Often in my self-communings, while I muse on
joys departed,

And the gloom which sadly follows, till my
tears unbidden fall, —

Till the way grows dark before me, and I grow
impatient-hearted,

Do I raise my eyes imploring to the picture on
the wall,

With a fond instinctive pleading, — with a child's
entire confiding

In the mother whose affection it has learned to
trust and prize,

Till a gentle resignation o'er my soul comes softly
gliding,

Born of the enduring patience shining in those
soft brown eyes.

And as o'er my troubled spirit flow the waves of
holier feeling,

Till rebellious tears no longer in the glimmering
firelight shine,

Then the magic picture slowly comes descending
from the ceiling,

Till the face is close beside me, and the eyes
look into mine.

Lightly on my lifted forehead falls the soft hand's
benediction,

And the lips in mild reproving, or in words of
love unclose,
Till my spirit shrinks no longer weakly from its
light affliction,
But a new-born strength and patience into all
my being flows.

And the hours pass by uncounted, while I sit in
listening stillness,
Spellbound by the magic power of those mysti-
cal dark eyes,
Heeding not the fire-light's fading, or the hushed
room's growing chillness, —
Seeing only those sweet features, as the moon-
light on them lies.

But when day with shining footprints o'er the dis-
tant hills advances,
And the sun's unclouded rising sets the glowing
east aflame,
Fades the vision of the night-time, with its train
of shadowy fancies,
And the picture shrinks in silence to the prison
of its frame.

ROTHERMEL'S WILLOW.



VER my neighbor's garden wall
There leans a willow-tree, fair and tall, —

A weeping willow, whose long boughs sigh,
And shiver, and sob, as the winds go by,

Like a sorrowful woman, standing there
With drooping garments and drifting hair.

And its branches move, as it grieving stands,
With a motion that seems like the wringing of
hands.

Why does it mourn so, night and day,
And why do its tresses drift *this* way?

Why does it seem that the striving tree
Has some sad message to speak to me?

For hark! in the branches' swinging sweep
There comes a whisper like "Weep, O weep!"

* * * * *

Through all the winter-time, cold and bare,
It shivered and sobbed in the bitter air,

Shaping its sorrow in longing words
Of last year's rain-drops and singing-birds. —

So sad and regretful his life must be
Who lives not on hope, but memory! —

And all the winter the grieving tree
Had something mournful to say to me.

So it wept and murmured, till, by and by,
There fell a smile from the pitying sky ;

And the long limbs paused in their hopeless beat,
And their talk of a grave and a winding-sheet, —

Trying to fashion a merrier rhyme,
A song more meet for the summer-time, —

While the limber branches of silver-gray
Grew lithe and living from day to day,

Till, when the mornings grew warm and strange,
There came a wondrous and beautiful change, —

So gradual, silent, and full of doubt,
One scarce dared say that the leaves were out,

Though every trailing limb was seen
Begirt with a halo of delicate green.

Yet, all the spring-time, the sighing tree
Had something mournful to say to me.

* * * * *

And now the summer-time, wide and free,
Broadens and brightens on town and tree ;

But still does the willow strive and yearn,
While rain-showers gather and sunbeams burn.

Often and often I turn away
From my steady vigils by night and day, —

From the patient eyes, and the paling cheek,
And the pallid fingers, so wan and weak,

Of one who has pined through many a day
For the gracious airs of the genial May, —

To watch the strife of the restless tree,
And wonder what it would say to me.

For still in the branches' drifting sweep
There comes a whisper like "Weep, O weep!"



"MY DEARLING."



Y Dearling! — thus, in days long fled,
 In spite of creed and court and queen,
 King Henry wrote to Anne Boleyn, —

The dearest pet name ever said,
 And dearly purchased, too, I ween!

Poor child! she played a losing game:
 She won a heart, — so Henry said, —
 But ah! the price she gave instead!

Men's hearts, at best, are but a name:
 She paid for Henry's with her head!

You count men's hearts as something worth?
 Not I: were I a maid unwed,
 I'd rather have my own fair head
 Than all the lovers on the earth,
 Than all the hearts that ever bled!

"My Dearling!" with a love most true,
 Having no fear of creed or queen,
 I breathe that name my prayers between;
 But it shall never bring to you
 The hapless fate of Anne Boleyn!

BONDS.



HE Winter gathers up the folds
 Of his torn robe from hills and wolds,
 New life breathes over vale and plain,
 And dead hearts come to life again, —

But O, these bonds!

Wild March forbears his boisterous ways,
 And whispers to the listening days
 A promise of the coming June;
 And life would be a precious boon, —

Except these bonds!

A robin sings on yonder limb,
 Amid the buds, a triumph hymn;
 And I could almost hear the bees
 Busy among the apple-trees,

But for these bonds!

My soul could catch spring's vital breath,
 Could break this icy trance of death,

As trees come out in fresher life
After the winter's woe and strife, —
Except these bonds.

O friend! how fair, in sun and dew,
The flowers would bloom the long year through,
But for the cruel winter-time!
I, too, were in my blossom-prime,
But for these bonds!

Each soul must have its strife with fate;
Tell me, which is the sadder state,
To fly, and fly, and find no rest,
Or dream away a life, oppressed
But by these bonds?



MY PEACE.



HERE in this haunted corner, where
First falls the light of each new mor-
row,

A sculptured face, of beauty rare,
Immutable, and still, and fair,
Pillowed amid its billowy hair,
Still keeps its sorrow.

I go and come ; I wake and sleep ;
I weep and laugh, exult and languish,
But still the lashes downward sweep,
And though the closed eyes do not weep,
The lips, with painful pressure, keep
Their silent anguish.

And as in evening solitude
I smile or sigh, as musing moves me,
This type of constant womanhood,
This eloquent, pale similitude
Of suffering, shames my changing mood, —
Its truth reproves me.

My sorrows seem but small and brief, —
 Soon softened into vague regretting ;
I find a balm in every leaf,
Build ships on every wreck-strewn reef,
Then blush before this marble Grief,
 Still unforgetting !

In time, all other woes grow old,
 All other hearts some solace borrow ;
The velvet leaves of spring unfold,
The autumn beards the grain with gold ;
But my pale Peace, yet unconsolated,
 Still keeps her sorrow !



CHRISTMAS CAROLS.



THE children sung a song, this Christ-
mas morning,

Mellow and clear, outside my cham-
ber door,

Waking me softly from my pleasant dreaming
Of unforgotten Christmas-days of yore.

Sweetly they sung, my neighbor's happy children,
Two merry girls and one glad-hearted boy,
Repeating oft their song's rejoicing burden, —
“On Christmas morn the angels sing for joy!”

Sweetly they sung; but ah! their cheerful voices
Broke up my soul's deep founts of hidden woe,
And pressing down my face against the pillow,
I let the bitter torrent overflow.

Missing the little child that warbled softly
Two years ago to-day, a song like this,
And, when the joyful melody was ended,
Held up her sweet mouth for a Christmas kiss.

Only one Christmas-eve my fair-eyed darling
Lisped of dear Santa Claus her dreams among,
Only one Christmas morn, white-robed and joy-
ful, —
Lifted her clear voice in a Christmas-song.

I see her little figure standing tiptoe,
To hang her dainty stocking on the wall ; —
O sinless heart, O perfect faith of childhood,
Believing everything and trusting all !

Peace, aching heart ! O, let me trust entirely,
With faith and strength that nothing can destroy,
That my sweet baby is among the angels
Who, on this Christmas morning, sing for joy !



THE VISION OF VIOLETS.



ONE shining morn in a vanished May

We wandered away from the tire-
some town,

To one of the isles in the dimpled bay ;

And warmly the loving sun looked down
On pleasant slopes where the green fields lay,
And fresh-turned furrows all damp and brown.

Heavy with fragrance was all the air,

And birds and bees were astir that day ;
The apple-orchards were white and fair,
And over them softly a rose-light lay,
Like that warm blush which the snow-Alps wear,
Watched and worshipped from far away.

Stooping, with dew-besprinkled brows,

We entered under the rosy roof,
Where the still air slept in a dreamy drowse,
So shutting the living world aloof,
That the gossamer webs on the bloomy boughs
Were all unbroken in warp and woof.

O, the vision that charmed our sight !

Hushed by a rare delight we stood,

As though we had found, in broad daylight,

The portal of an enchanted wood,

Or, stealing the wand of some elfin sprite,

Had suddenly put on fairyhood.

For lo ! the mossy and rain-fresh ground

Was all empurpled with violet bloom ;

Hollows were hidden and hillocks crowned,

Leaving so little breathing-room

That all the wondering air around

Was hushed and fainting with much perfume.

Pressing and pushing in purple crowds,

Laying, lovingly, cheek to cheek,

Drifted together in waves and clouds, —

As some mad painter, in wildest freak,

With wealth of pigment his canvas shrouds,

Lavishing color in mass and streak.

Open-eyed, with a startled air,

They stood, amazed at their plenteousness,

Scattered profusely everywhere

In wasteful lavishment ; one might guess

A storm of blossoms had fallen there
And covered the ground with a sweet excess.

I stooped for a handful — “No, — forbear !
It were sacrilege ; let them stay
All ungathered, they are so fair ;
We will go back to the town, and say
That here, in the broad free light and air,
We have seen a miracle wrought to-day !

“For these are not living violets : see !
Never a cup is with dew impearled, —
Never a single roving bee
Over their ranks has his pinion furled ;
These are phantoms, it seems to me,
The sinless souls of the violet world, —

“The souls of all which have bloomed and died
Since the first was in Eden born ;
Victims of heedless sport or pride,
Prized, neglected, or crushed in scorn,
Won and wasted and flung aside, —
And this is their resurrection morn.

“ They have escaped from the covetous hands
Which wove them in many a diadem,
To crown loose tresses or braided bands, —
Leaf and blossom and tender stem ;
The children who twined them in wilting strands,
And the careless feet which trampled them.

“ The lawless butterfly’s piracy
Shall drain no longer their honey-store ;
No stain shall sully their purity,
No storm affright them with rush and roar ;
And the thirsty moth, and the pilfering bee
Shall never trouble them any more ! ”

And thus we left them ; but still for me
Does that fair island the vision keep, —
Still on the orchard the rose-hues be,
And still in the shadow the sweet airs sleep ;
And under the blossomed boughs I see
The violets clustering ankle-deep.

THE NEW TEMPLE.



OW shall we make a house of worth
 Fit for the Builder of the earth, —
 A temple high and broad,
 A dwelling for our God ?

Build the wide windows fair and high, —
 Let in the light of sun and sky ;
 Shut not the Master's face
 Out of His dwelling-place.

Make room for tender Charity,
 And Love's unwearying ministry ;
 Let Patience mild and meek
 Her gentle teachings speak.

Build all the doorway arches wide,
 Yet make no room for pompous Pride, —
 So Vanity and Sin
 Shall never enter in.

Let not the false similitude
Of marble shame the honest wood ;
Let not Hypocrisy
Within our temple be.

Let not the breath of worldly gain
Its sacred atmosphere profane ;
Let Mammon come not near
The souls which worship here.

Let Bigotry, and Fear, and Doubt
Remain forevermore without ;
Let not their shadows fall
Within its holy wall.

Lest, when the Christ — as once of yore
He entered at the temple door —
Shall come to see how dim
Our love has grown for him, —

To see how much of good and grace
We've gathered to His dwelling-place,
He speak reproofs, as then,
Against the sins of men,

And grieving, ask us, "Is it well
Within *my house* to buy and sell?
Behold, my eye perceives
Only a den of thieves!"

No! When, in answer to our prayer,
He comes and walks among us there,
O, may we hear anew,
"My peace I leave with you!"

"For in this earthly house of mine
I feel my Father's presence shine;
My children here always
Live even as they pray!"



WERTER TO CHARLOTTE.



COME closer, dear persuasive eyes,
Lift me above this dark despair ;
To you my soul forever cries,
Ye are so tender and so fair.

O loving eyes, compelling eyes,
Help me to conquer and arise !

The sunset darkens from the skies,
The shades come creeping on and on ;
I know the stars will soon arise,
And ere they burn, you will be gone.
O, strange and steady planet-eyes,
Between our souls the midnight lies !

Who could foretell so great a change ?
The careless touch of finger-tips,
Then sweet and strange, O sweet and strange,
Wild hurrying hearts and hovering lips.
O marvellous eyes, resistless eyes,
With you my soul's salvation lies !

O, who shall bid this sorrow cease,
And gather up Life's wasted wine?
Not even Death can give me peace, —
He cannot part your soul and mine.
O haunting eyes, immortal eyes,
Love's bitter anguish never dies!



RESTLESSNESS.



DOWN in the harbor the ships lie moored,
 Weary sea-birds with folded wing, —
 Anchors sunken and sails secured ;
 Yet on the water they rock and swing,
 Rock and swing,
 As though each keel were a living thing.

Silence sleeps on the earth and air,
 Never a breath does the sea-breeze blow,
 Yet like living pendulums there,
 Down in the harbor, to and fro,
 To and fro,
 Backward and forward the vessels go.

As a child on its mother's breast,
 Cradled in happy slumber, lies,
 Yet, half-conscious of joy and rest,
 Varies its breathing, and moves and sighs,
 Moves and sighs,
 Yet neither wakes nor opens its eyes.

Or it may be, the vessels long
— For almost human they seem to me —
For the leaping waves, and the storm-wind strong,
And the fetterless freedom out at sea,
 Out at sea,
And feel their rest a captivity.

So as a soul from a higher sphere,
Fettered down to this earthly clay,
Strives at the chains which bind it here,
Tossing and struggling, day by day,
 Day by day,
Longing to break them and flee away,

Strive the ships, in their restlessness,
Whether the tide be high or low ; —
And why these tear-drops, I cannot guess,
As down in the harbor, to and fro,
 To and fro,
Backward and forward the vessels go.

B E L L A .



HERE the Northern pine-trees sing,
 And the crystal torrents spring,
 In a warm and dainty nest,
 Dwells the maid that I love best, —
 Born, as is the Alpine rose,
 Blooming in the midst of snows.

Yet, so much she seems to me
 Like a dream of Italy, —
 Beautiful, serene, and calm,
 Opulent with bloom and balm, —
 That my heart leaps up to greet her,
Vita della mia vita !

Ah, *carina!* in thine eyes
 What miraculous meaning lies !
 Ah, what depths of rare romance
 Charm me in their eloquent glance, —
 Full of wonderful witcheries,
 Shadowy, mournful, tender eyes, —
 Yet their mellow midnight seems
 Softly starred with silver dreams ;

Fairest eyes on earth they be,
Marvellous eyes of Italy ; —
Eyes which make the hours go fleeter,
Vita della mia vita !

Dreaming, oft again I dwell
In the land I love so well, —
Where the fruited vineyards lie
Smiling at the smiling sky, —
And among the graceful shapes
Gathering the clustered grapes,
Eccolo ! she parts the vines,
And a golden arrow shines
Tipped with sunlight, in the rare
Purple blackness of her hair, —
How my glad heart springs to meet her,
Vita della mia vita !

Ah, no lovelier maid, I ween,
Roams by Tiber's mellow sheen,
Or, with lingering footsteps, strays,
Where the fount of Trevi plays,
Or, with heart devoid of ill,
Muses on the Pincian Hill,

Listening to the clear farewells
Of the silvery sunset-bells,
While the roses, one and all,
Nodding from the ivied wall
Blush to find her fair face sweeter, —
Vita della mia vita!



APRIL RAIN.



DOWN from thy home of cloud and mist

O fall lovingly, April rain !

Wash the gray from the amethyst, —

Melt the hearts of these lingering drifts, —

Plead till thy patient lips have kissed

The earth to its spring-life : the while thy gifts, —

Joy, hope, freshness, — thou lavishest

Wide over hill and plain !

Call to the robin, whose ruddy breast

Throbs with the joy of his first sweet strain ;

Bid him put on his brightest vest,

Bid him come up in the elms and sing, —

Sing his sweetest, and flutter his best,

Till our full hearts ache with the joy of spring, —

Ache with a blissful pain oppressed,

Beautiful April rain !

Over the graves of the loved asleep

O fall tenderly, April rain !


Not with a loud and passionate sweep,
But quietly, like the fall of tears
From the loving eyes of those who weep
The beauty and bliss which coming years,
Whatever measures of joy they heap,
Can never restore again !

Call to the timid flowers, which stay
In the prisoning earth, where the drifts have
lain ;

With thy pattering fingers brush away
The leaves which wrap them like burial shrouds ;
Lure them out to the loving day,
Bid them come up in blushing crowds
To broider the dripping skirts of May,
Beautiful April rain !

Over the hopes which moulder low
O fall tenderly, April rain !
Buried away from us long ago,
Under the wearisome world's dead leaves, —
Lifeless and voiceless, — who may know
But haply thy vital voice, that gives
Life and leaf to the roots below,
May bid them arise again ?

CONSOLATION.

OW leave, O leave me! I have stayed
to hear
All the vain comfortings your lips have
said, —

Well meant, but yet they fall upon my ear
As yellow leaves might whirl about my head; —
Now leave me with my dead.

I would not be ungrateful, friends; but still
Your kind, condoling voices trouble me:
This aching need, which words can never fill,
Rejects your proffered comfort utterly,
As husks and vanity.

They are unwise physicians who would bind
A bleeding wound, and pour in wine and oil,
While yet the arrow-head remains behind; —
This stab, whence yet the ruddy life-drops boil,
Mocks your unskilful toil.

You tell me that to him I mourn is given
Such bliss as makes this world seem poor and
dim ; —

Is there an angel in the whole of heaven,
In all the shining ranks of seraphim,
Can take *my* place to him ?

Can he be happy while I grieve and pine ?
Can he rejoice, and I in misery ?
Then he is changed, and is no longer mine ;
For he so loved me, that he could not be
Content away from me.

And yet you say he dwells in joy and peace,
Far from this dim and sorrowful estate,
And, when my earthly wanderings shall cease,
Will come and meet me at life's outer gate :
“ Be strong,” you say, “ and wait.”

Would that I were like Stephen, and could see,
What time the cruel stones bruise out my soul,
The opening heavens, and angels waiting me !
Alas ! I hear no homeward chariot-roll,
No welcome to the goal.

Ah me! the red is yet upon my cheek,
And in my veins life's vigorous currents play;
Adown my hair there shines no warning streak,
And the sweet meeting which you paint to-day
Seems sadly far away.

Another tells me that he loves me still, —
Sees, hears, and guides me through life's hurry-
ing throng,
While I, despite my yearning sense and will,
Am blind and deaf, and do his deep love wrong,
By weeping all day long.

What does it comfort me, if still he walks
Beside me all the while, invisibly?
What does it help me, that a dear ghost mocks
Blind eyes with unseen smiles? I fail to see
What comfort it may be.

There is *no* balm. Though he may dwell in bliss,
I sit in grief. It is the loss, the lack,
The absence, and the utter emptiness
Which kill me. Comfort? — Find the grave-
ward track
And bring my darling back!

WHEN THE LEAVES ARE TURNING
BROWN.



NEVER is my heart so gay
 In the budding month of May,
 Never does it beat a tune
 Half so sweet in bloomy June,
 Never knows such happiness
 As on such a day as this,
 When October dons her crown,
 And the leaves are turning brown.

Breathe, sweet children, soft regrets
 For the vanished violets ;
 Sing, young lovers, the delights
 Of the golden summer nights ; —
 Never in the sunnier hours
 On my way such radiance showers
 As from heaven falls softly down,
 When the leaves are turning brown.

Braid your girdles, fresh and gay,
 Children, in the bloom of May ;

Twist your chaplets in young June,
Maidens, — they will fade full soon ;
Twine ripe roses, July-red,
Lovers, for the dear one's head ; —
I will weave my richer crown
When the leaves are turning brown !



THE SINGER.



IN this world, so wide and lonesome,
 One dear friend have I, —
 One whose loving presence cheers me

Under every sky :

Never care, nor pain, nor sorrow

Comes when she is nigh ; —

Who so blest as I ?

She has neither wealth nor station,

Gems nor precious things ;

She has only long, fair tresses,

And most glorious wings ;

She can neither strive nor labor :

What of that ? she sings, —

Wondrously she sings !

Once, as wearily we wandered

Over moor and plain,

Up the hills and down the valleys,

In the sun and rain,

Said I, softly, “ Let some other

Hear this marvellous strain,

Else you sing in vain.

“ Sing until the deaf ones listen, —
Sing and win a name ;
Sing till human hearts, awakened,
Yield you all you claim ; —
Sing and make the worldlings wonder,
Angel, sing for Fame!
Prithee sing for Fame ! ”

Then she tried a simple measure,
Faint and quivering ;
But her sweet voice failed and trembled,
Till, poor timid thing !
All the wise ones sneered and whispered,
And she would not sing, —
No, she would not sing.

Then I said, “ We two are friendless,
Poor and unconsoled ;
I am growing sad and hungry,
Weary, faint, and cold :
Since you will not sing for Glory,
Angel, sing for Gold, —
Prithee sing for Gold ! ”

So the throng stood still and listened
With expectant ears ;
But the sweet-voiced singer faltered,
Full of doubts and fears,
And the soul-enchanting music
Failed in sobs and tears, —
Bitter sobs and tears !

“Fairer than a morning blossom,
Gentler than a dove,
Purer than the sky when Hesper
Bares his brow above, —
Since you crave not Gold nor Glory,
Angel, sing for Love, —
Prithee sing for Love !”

Then she sang, O most divinely !
With no pause or fear, —
Sang until the best and proudest
Lent an eager ear :
But the true soul of her music
Only one can hear, —
One alone can hear !

AUTUMN RAIN.



HE last gleam of summer blue is going,
The dead leaves lie sodden in the rain,
The loud, lonesome wind is blowing,
blowing; —

Will the golden summer ever come again?

The vines at the lattice sigh and shiver,
The trees sob and tremble as in pain,
The loud, lonesome wind goes by forever; —
Will the golden summer ever come again?

Return, O ye days whose dewy closes
Brought peace to the aching heart and brain!
Return, bashful lilies and white roses,
And bring back the summer-time again!

Awake in the windy midnight, hearing
The wild tempest's sorrowful refrain,
My heart sinks down sad and heavy, fearing
That the summer-time will never come again.

O warm, happy hearts, by love defended,
Ye shrink not to feel the winter near,
Your sweet blossom-days are never ended,
For love makes it summer all the year.



OUT AT SEA.



AR on the deep mid-ocean tossed,
Leagues away from the friendly shore,
In the watery wilderness lost,
Driven and deafened by rush and roar,
Baffled by wind and wave are we ; —
What sweet home-spirits may there be
Sadly pondering on our wandering
Wide and wearisome, out at sea !

Lying here in my tossing bed,
I dream of ruin, and rock, and wreck, —
Hearing the slow, continuous tread
Of the sailor who walks the deck,
Keeping his long watch patiently ; —
Gentler watchers on shore there be ;
Eyes which weep for us, leaving sleep for us,
Fond watch keep for us, out at sea !

In at the narrow window there
Drifts the ocean-wind, wild and damp,

Frightening into flicker and flare
The feeble flame of the swinging lamp ;
Yet though lonesome and dark it be,
There are places where steadily
Faith's fires burn for us, true hearts mourn for us,
Dear arms yearn for us, out at sea !

Blinded and beaten by wind and foam,
Hurled and tossed at the sea's command,
Sweet the thought that in some dear home,
Steady and still on the solid land,
Where our hopes and our memories be
Safely harbored from storm and sea,
Love takes heed for us, love's lips plead for us,
Love's prayers speed for us, out at sea !

Night and darkness, and storm and clouds ;
Creak of cordage and shudder of sails ;
Drifting drearily through the shrouds
There is a murmur of mournful wails, —
Dirges sung for the lost at sea,
Where the tempest is fierce and free :
Father, hear to us, bend Thine ear to us,
Be Thou near to us, out at sea !

A BRIDE.



HIS fair shape is your bride-to-be ?

This white vision you claim as yours ?

This is the household deity

You are to worship while life endures ?

Surely a splendor so strange and new

Had in another sphere its birth ; —

How could a mortal man like you

Lure her down to this dull, cold earth ?

Lovely ? yes, — there is not a flaw

Her perfect fairness to cloud or spoil ; —

Nature for once has broken her law,

And made a beauty without its foil.

Could threads of gold be as finely spun,

They might shine like her drifting hair ; —

And such a brow ! — there was never one

Half so queenly or half so fair.

Eyes which fill us with tender pain,
So bewitching their mellow shine, —
Winning all gazers again and again
To bow in vain at their lovely shrine.

Never were human lips before
So rarely moulded in any land;
Never a shoulder such dimples bore, —
And look at her dainty, peach-bloom hand!

Flushing with young life, pure and rich.
Warm and pink to the pearly nails; —
The listening Venus in yonder niche
Tries to rival their charm, — but fails.

Yet how pulseless and still she stands!
Never a blush is on her cheek,
Never a tremble along her hands!
Say, can she love, or weep, or speak?

Was she spoken at once to life,
Every dimple, and tint, and curl?
Always a possible queen or wife,
Never a babe, or a bashful girl?

Faultless all, in her beauteous prime, —
Stately, regal, if so you will, —
Yet were she mine, I could wish, some time,
Her lip to quiver, her hand to thrill.

She is perfection, and nothing less, —
Beauty's perfection, and nothing more ;
Looking on her, I only guess
What your future may have in store.

Garlands of flowers from lands abroad,
Marvels of artificial bloom, —
Blossoms which never were in the bud,
Flaunt their falsehood in yonder room.

Petals of muslin and silken woof,
Leaves of paper and stems of wire, —
Flowers more brilliant and winter-proof
Than ever sprung from our earthly mire.

Won by their flattering falsity,
(Mark the warning my words disclose,)
I found, this morning, a famished bee
Dead, in the heart of a cambric rose !

CHRYSANTHEMUMS.



ONCE, long ago in summer's glow,
 We threaded, you and I,
 A garden's maze of pleasant ways,
 Whose beauty charmed the eye, —
 Where violets bent in sweet content,
 And pinks stood proud and high.

And from their screen of tender green
 Broad pansies, peeping through,
 Wore gorgeous dyes like butterflies ;
 Cool lilies kept the dew,
 And fair and tall along the wall
 The climbing roses grew.

The velvet bees in fragrant ease,
 Lay drunken with perfume,
 Song-sparrows made the garden's shade
 Their fitting concert-room,
 And all the air was music there,
 And all the earth was bloom.

There grew one plant in utter want
Of bud or blossom-dower ; —
I broke a spray of leaves away,
And said, “ The winter hour
Will crown these stems with diadems, —
This bears the Christ’s sweet flower.

“ It cheers with bloom the stormy gloom
By chill December nursed ;
And it is told in stories old
That this fair blossom first,
On that blest morn when Christ was born,
Into white beauty burst.

“ Perhaps — ah well, we cannot tell
If truly it be so ;
I but repeat the legend sweet,
And only this I know, —
That in the prime of Christmas time
The Christ’s sweet flowers blow.

“ More pure and clear than any here,
Their snowy discs unfold,
White as a star that melts afar
Into the morning’s gold,

And odor rare above compare,
Their fragrant fringes hold.

“ This branch I break for memory’s sake,
And ere descends the snow,
The slender bough I sever now
Within our home shall grow ;
How brightly there, all white and fair,
The Christ’s sweet flowers shall blow ! ”

* * * * *

The curtains fold away the cold, —
The bleak and drifting snow ;
Red fire-gleams fall where on the wall
The pleasant pictures glow ;
And fair and white beneath the light
The Christ’s sweet flowers blow.

But cold and deep the snow-drifts heap
Above thy silent form ;
I cannot hold my garment’s fold
Between thee and the storm, —
I cannot dare the bitter air,
And clasp thee near and warm.

And what to me are light and glee
When all the while I know
That cold and deep the snow-drifts heap
Above thy slumber low,
What do I care that white and fair
The Christ's sweet flowers blow ?



A DREAM.



ACK again, darling? O day of delight!

How I have longed for you, morning
and night!

Watched for you, pined for you, all the days
through,

Craving no boon and no blessing but you, —

Prayed for you, plead for you, sought you in vain,

Striving forever to find you again, —

Counting all anguish as naught, if I might

Clasp you again as I clasp you to-night!

O, I have sorrowed and suffered so much

Since I last answered your lips' loving touch, —

Through the night-watches, in daylight's broad
beams,

Anguished by visions and tortured by dreams, —

Dreams so replete with bewildering pain,

Still it is throbbing in heart and in brain :

O, for I dreamed, — keep me close to your side,

Darling, O darling! — I dreamed you had died!

Dreamed that I stood by your pillow, and heard
From your pale lips love's last half-uttered word ;
And by the light of the May-morning skies
Watched your face whiten, and saw your dear eyes
Gazing far into the Wonderful Land ;
Felt your fond fingers grow cold in my hand ; —
“ Darling,” you whispered, “ My darling ! ” you
 said
Faintly, so faintly, — and then you were dead !

O the dark hours when I knelt by your grave,
Calling upon you to love and to save, —
Pleading in vain for a sign or a word
Only to tell me you listened and heard, —
Only to say you remembered and knew
How all my soul was in anguish for you ;
Bitter, despairing, the tears that I shed,
Darling, O darling, because you were dead !

O the black days of your absence, my own !
O to be left in the wide world alone !
Long, with our little one clasped to my breast,
Wandered I, seeking for refuge and rest ;
Yet all the world was so careless and cold,

Vainly I sought for a sheltering fold ;—
There was no roof and no home for my head,
Darling, O darling, because you were dead !

Yet, in the midst of the darkness and pain,
Darling, I knew I should find you again !
Knew, as the roses know, under the snow,
How the next summer will set them aglow ;
So did I always, the dreary days through,
Keep my heart single and sacred to you
As on the beautiful day we were wed,
Darling, O darling, although you were dead !

O the great joy of awaking, to know
I did but dream all that torturing woe !
O the delight, that my searching can trace
Nothing of coldness or change in your face !
Still is your forehead unfurrowed and fair ;
None of the gold is lost out of your hair,
None of the light from your dear eyes has fled —
Darling, O how could I dream you were dead ?

Now you are here, you will always remain,
Never, O never to leave me again !

How it has vanished, the anguish of years !
Vanished ! nay, these are not sorrowful tears, —
Happiness only my cheek has impearled, —
There is no grieving for me in the world ;
Dark clouds may threaten, but I have no fear,
Darling, O darling, because you are here !



CITY SMOKE.



O, from a thousand hearthstones, here
and there,

Released from all this tumult, noise,
and care,

The smoke goes wreathing through the sunny air.

Like a freed spirit from a funeral pyre,

Pure from the bitter trial of the fire,

Free to arise, and triumph, and aspire,

Its way along the gloomy walls it wends,

Through troubled clouds of city dust ascends,

And melting far in heaven's own glory ends.

O spirit! prisoned, shadowed, sorely tried, —

O spirit! thrust the blinding cloud aside, —

The heaven of Truth, and Love, and Light is wide!

Up circle! prisons open toward the sky;

True spirits all are fire-born; — ashes die;

Arise, and rank thee with the hosts on high!

The sun shall give thee banners, and his light

Shall be as swiftest spears to slay the night,

And put the starless hours of wrong to flight!

IN VAIN.



HERE the turf is broken and brown,
Darling, under this peaceful pine,
Since thou hast laid thy burden down,
Entering into the rest divine,
How, beloved, shall I carry mine ?

How shall I carry this heavy heart,
Laden sorely with grief and fears ?
Since our paths are so far apart,
All my strength is dissolved in tears, —
How shall I bear it through all the years ?

How shall I carry this load of care ?
Lightened no more by thy word or smile,
O, the burden is hard to bear !
Longer stretches each weary mile, —
Darling, rest me a little while !

Into thy silence, so strange and vast,
Comes there never a thought of me ?
Tell me, tell me, does Love outlast
All life's sorrowful mystery ?
O to know what the truth may be !

O, how often thou saidst to me,
In the beautiful time gone by,
Never could any other be
Half so precious and dear as I, —
Never another beneath the sky !

Hast thou forgotten it now, dear child ?
Hast thou flown to some happy star,
Leaving me, in my doubtings wild,
Unremembered, remote, afar,
Nothing dearer than others are ?

Now I reach for thy tender hand,
Now I pine for thy loving heart,
Vainly, vainly : and yet we stand
Only the width of a grave apart ; —
Speak, beloved, if so near thou art !

Ah, dear silent ! in vain these tears
Water thy grave with their bitter rain ;
Never hereafter in all the years
Wilt thou answer my call again ; —
Never, never, — in vain, in vain !

SEA-BIRDS.



LONESOME sea-gull, floating far
 Over the ocean's icy waste,
 Aimless and wide thy wanderings are,
 Forever vainly seeking rest ; —
 Where is thy mate, and where thy nest ?

'Twixt wintry sea and wintry sky,
 Cleaving the keen air with thy breast,
 Thou sailest slowly, solemnly :
 No fetter on thy wing is pressed ; —
 Where is thy mate, and where thy nest ?

O restless, homeless human soul,
 Following for aye thy nameless quest ;
 The gulls float, and the billows roll, —
 Thou watchest still, and questionest ; —
 Where is *thy* mate, and where thy nest ?

THE CHAMBER OF REST.



HAD wandered from morn till the
twilight was gray

In a lonely and wearisome quest,
When I came to a love-lighted home in my way,
And the dear ones who dwelt there besought
me to stay

With pleadings so warm that I could but obey ;
So they led me, by slumber oppressed,
To a dear little room, which I think of to-day
As the Beautiful Chamber of Rest.

For it seemed as though angels, in visible form,
Kept watch o'er the travel-worn guest ;
And though the dark midnight was frantic with
storm,
All bright with love's atmosphere, rosy and warm,
Was the Beautiful Chamber of Rest.

How soft was the low couch's draping, — how
light
Its weight on the dream-laden breast !

And the loosely-looped curtains, so snowily white,
Mocked the robe of the tempest that raged in its
 might,

And shut out the stormy and boisterous night
 From the Beautiful Chamber of Rest.

And when the new morning was gilding the skies,
 I heard in my slumbers so blest

A gentle voice murmuring sweetly, "Arise!"

And I woke from my dream with a joyous sur-
 prise,

To meet the soft radiance of loving blue eyes
Whose smiling transformed to a bright Paradise
 The Beautiful Chamber of Rest.

Ah me! by and by, when my life-dream is told,
 And I cease from its wearisome quest,

Then slumber's soft arms will my weary frame
 fold

In the chamber that waits for the young and the
 old —

But the room will be dark, and the bed will be
 cold,

And the pillow all dreamlessly pressed,

And the curtains cling damply, all covered with
mould,
In that, my last Chamber of Rest.

But though long on my eyelids the death-slumber
lies,
I shall wake to a happiness blest,
If the bright morning-angel who bids me arise
Have the dear loving voice, and the dewy blue
eyes
Which woke me that morn with a joyful surprise,
In the Beautiful Chamber of Rest!



WHERE THE ROSES GREW.



HIS is where the roses grew,
 In the summer that is gone;
 Fairer bloom or richer hue

Never summer shone upon :
 O, the glories vanished hence !
 O, the sad imperfect tense !

This is where the roses grew
 When the July days were long, —
 When the garden all day through
 Echoed with delight and song ; —
 Hark ! the dead and broken stalks
 Eddying down the windy walks !

Never was a desert waste,
 Where no blossom-life is born,
 Half so dreary and unblest,
 Half so lonesome and forlorn,
 Since in this we dimly see
 All the bliss that *used to be*.

Where the roses used to grow !
 And the west-wind's wailing words

Tell in whispers faint and low
Of the famished humming-birds, —
Of the bees which search in vain
For the honey-cells again !

This is where the roses grew,
Till the ground was all perfume,
And, whenever zephyrs blew,
Carpeted with crimson bloom !
Now the chill and scentless air
Sweeps the flower-plats brown and bare.

Hearts have gardens sad as this,
Where the roses bloom no more, —
Gardens where no summer-bliss
Can the summer-bloom restore, —
Where the snow melts not away
At the warming kiss of May ; —

Gardens where the vernal morns
Never shed their sunshine down, —
Where are only stems and thorns,
Veiled in dead leaves, curled and brown, —
Gardens where we only see
Where the roses *used to be* !

LITTLE NANNIE.



WHILE we watched in chilly May
Winter's slow surrender,
Waiting vainly for a day
Warm and soft and tender,
Little Nannie found her way
Into summer splendor.

Nannie, with her rose-white face
And her dove-like cooing,
Winning in all hearts a place
By her artless wooing,
And the deeds of baby grace
She was always doing.

We whose lives have left behind
Childhood's paths forever,
In our tiresome strivings find
Years of vain endeavor :
Tedious toil of hand and mind,
Recompensed, ah never !

But this world, whose brightest day
Seems to us so dreary,
Nannie found all bright and gay,
Love-alight and cheery, —
Stayed a little while to play,
And went home unwearied.

When the summer-garden glows
With its blossoms many,
And we find a wee white rose
Lovelier than any,
We shall say, “ How fair it grows !
This is little Nannie ! ”



WHOM THE LORD LOVETH.



NOT always of the favored ones and gay,
On whom the world smiles with in-
dulgent eyes, —

Who have not learned the depths of tears and
sighs, —

Not always those whom men love most, are they
Whom the Lord loveth !

Bending beneath the weight of griefs and woes,
I see a pilgrim, pale with earnest thought,
Weighed down by sorrows which the world
knows not,

Unnoticed and alone, yet one of those
Whom the Lord loveth.

Wealth, glory, worldly pride, aside he threw,
For the deep faith within him, — far too strong
To brook divided powers ; — untired, life-long,
Has been his labor for the Pure and True, —
Whom the Lord loveth.

His heart's best idols crumbled to decay,
And seeming friends grew frigid and unkind ;
But still for every love which he resigned
Another angel hovered around his way,
Whom the Lord loveth.

The many look upon him scornfully,
And mockers laugh, and scoff his patient faith,
Yet not one harsh repaying word he saith ;
For always meek and pitiful is he
Whom the Lord loveth.

His worn feet grope through thorns, in shadows
dim,
Red spots, which are not roses, mark his way,
Yet oft, as hovering wings around him play,
A crown-like halo lights the brow of him
Whom the Lord loveth.

O strong in faith and love ! all needlessly
My lips essay to cheer thy martyrdom ;
Thou hast a sure reward, — and till it come
Let me embrace thy feet, and learn of thee
Whom the Lord loveth.

SLEEP.



SLEEP, beloved! the night has come;
 Vanished the sunset's golden gleam;
 Drowned in darkness, the earth is
 dumb, —

All but the wind and the lulling stream:
 Sleep, beloved! and, haply, dream, —

Dream and dream

Till the morning again shall beam.

Think of the ocean, which evermore

Tosses and strives like a restless soul;

Listen its far, continuous roar,

And its slumberous sigh on the rocky shoal:

Think of the billows which, sobbing, roll, —

Roll and roll,

Finding never their long-sought goal.

Think of the forests, so green and dark

Stretching a many miles away,

Waving their myriad leaves; and hark!

Hear their hum as the soft winds play,

And watch the swing of the boughs that sway, —

Sway and sway

Upward and downward the livelong day.

Think of the small and steady rain,

Falling fast when the black clouds meet,

Making the glad leaves dance again

With its thrilling touch and its murmur sweet ;

Hear on the roof the thick drops beat, —

Beat and beat,

Patting like millions of fluttering feet.

Think of the wastes of waving grass,

Far on the wide, wide prairies seen,

Broken to waves as the breezes pass,

Ploughed into furrows of golden green ;

How to their kisses its tassels lean, —

Lean and lean,

Rolling in ripples of changing sheen.

Sleep, beloved ! thy slow lids close, —

Faithful vigils my eyes shall keep ;

Drowsily drooping in dim repose,

Poppies pale on thy pillow weep ;

Cradled in slumberous thoughts to sleep, —

Sleep and sleep,

While the midnight is dark and deep !

ANSWER ME.



If you love me, friend, to-night,

Much and tenderly,

Let me rest my wearied head

Here upon your knee ;

And the while I question you,

Prithee answer me, —

Answer me !

Is there not a gleam of peace

On this tiresome earth ?

Does not one oasis cheer

All this dreary dearth ?

And does all this toil and pain

Give no blessing birth ?

Answer me !

Comes there never quiet, when

Once our hearts awake ?

Must they then forevermore

Labor, strive, and ache ?

Have they no inheritance

But to bear — and break ?

Answer me !

CRADLE-TIME.



THE glory of the sunset fades away
From the tall church-spires of the
darkening town,
And on the waters of the western bay
The orange tints are sobering to brown.

This is the hour when the fond mother folds
Her infant closely to her pillowing breast,
And, kissing oft the little hand she holds,
Sings dreamily, and lulls her babe to rest.

For me, I hold all Fate has left to me, —
A little golden ripple of fair hair ; —
I lay it on my bosom tenderly,
And try to think my baby nestles there.

O golden hair ! Where is the shining head,
The baby brow which once you used to crown ?
The tender eyes, with all their love unsaid,
Into whose depths my yearning soul looked
down ?

O happy mother ! through your window there
I see you clasp and kiss your little child, —
Its white arms wound amid your tresses fair :
And how, O how shall I be reconciled ?

The small, soft hands which tangled down *my* hair
Are folded from their play forevermore,
The rosy feet which pattered here and there
Have danced their last across this silent floor.

The dainty robes are folded smooth and clean,
The half-worn shoes stand empty, side by side ;
The basket that she heaped her playthings in
Lies half-filled, as she left it when she died.

The pot of flowers she carried to and fro,
Or placed among her toys upon the floor,
Thrives undisturbed ; though fair the blossoms
blow,
No sweet voice coaxes for them any more.

These are her finger-marks upon the pane, —
I guard them with a jealous carefulness ;
And this dear pictured face still keeps its stain, —
The misty halo of her frequent kiss.

And in these rooms where once her sweet voice
rung,

Now soaring loud, now softly murmuring,
There floats the echo of a song half sung, —
The last my darling ever tried to sing.

But you, aflush with happy motherhood,
Your child alive and warm upon your arm, —
You look across into my solitude,
And tell me I must be resigned and calm ; —

That God is good and kind, despite my grief ;
That He has saved my babe from pain and woe,
And she is blest. Help Thou mine unbelief,
O Healer ! But I would that I could know

On what fair angel-bosom rests to-night
The tender cheek I touched so reverently, —
What white-robed spirit robs me of my right,
And takes my baby's kiss away from me.

KISSES.



HE kiss of friendship, kind and calm,
 May fall upon the brow like balm ;
 A deeper tenderness may speak
 In precious pledges on the cheek ;
 Thrice dear may be, when young lips meet,
 Love's dewy pressure, close and sweet ;—
 But more than all the rest I prize
 The faithful lips that kiss my eyes.

Smile, lady, smile, when courtly lips
 Touch reverently your finger-tips ;
 Blush, happy maiden, when you feel
 The lips which press love's glowing seal ;
 But as the slow years darklier roll,
 Grown wiser, the experienced soul
 Will own as dearer far than they
 The lips which kiss the tears away !

APRIL SNOW.



O, the white wonder born of night !

The earth reclaims her banished
grace,

As Winter, pausing in his flight,

Flings back his snow in April's face.

Heavy with ruddy buds, the trees

Shake off the light flakes, while below

Rejoicing, the beholder sees

The young grass peeping through the snow.

In the brown elms a robin sings

To the chill air a summer tune, —

Fanning the snow-wreaths with his wings,

He laughs a prophecy of June.

O for the robin's faith to-day,

To look beyond these showery glooms,

Where, 'mid the sunny locks of May,

Are lilac-spires and apple-blooms !

VOYAGING.



IN the fierce battle of contending waves
 Alternate lost and won,
 Driving o'er sunken wrecks and name-
 less graves

The strong ship struggles on.

Striving and toiling like a soul in bonds,

Its haven unattained ;—

The wild waves call, and the wild wind responds,
 And rest is not yet gained.

Often the eye sweeps the horizon's verge,

To see if there may be

Some small relief from the incessant surge,
 And the wide waste of sea ;

But all in vain. No sail or living thing

Breaks the monotony, —

Only the lonesome gulls on slanting wing
 Between the sea and sky.

The dews descend and the brief day is done,
The skies flush rosily,
And all too early the unwilling sun
Goes down behind the sea.

I gaze and gaze, and wonder childishly
If haply there may be,
Beyond that distant line of sky and sea,
One heart which longs for me ;

If, far beyond these billows hoarse and rude,
Like needle to the pole,
There trembles toward my utter solitude
One unforgetting soul.

The shadows fall, the wind grows chill and damp,
The still stars crown the night,
And from the binnacle the faithful lamp
Sends out its lonely light.

I gaze upon the hurrying waves, and mark
Their twinkling brilliancy, —
Like myriad fire-flies drowning in the dark
Of the insatiate sea.

I think with tears of the dear distant land, —
The love which now I lack, —
The pleading eyes, the dear detaining hand,
Which strove to hold me back.

To these, even in my dreams, my memory turns,
Prizing love's blessed boon, —
To these in vain my homesick spirit yearns
As sad seas toward the moon.

All the dear faces which I left behind
Seem dearer and more fair,
All the old friendships cluster near and kind,
And keep me from despair.

So am I cheered and comforted, to prove
What these drear days have shown :
The soul that shrines one dear remembered love
Is nevermore alone !

BELIEVE IN ME.



THE ship is waiting ; the impatient sails,
Eager to wing their flight across the
brine,

With throbbing bosoms woo the enamored gales :
I go ; — and, going, take your hand in mine,
And say, “ Believe in me ! ”

I know how widely far and marvellous lands
And heaving seas will stretch between us twain ;
I know that years may pass before our hands,
Now closely clasping, shall be clasped again, —
Yet still believe in me.

I know that yonder ocean’s mighty strife
Awaits me, with its threatening dangers fraught ;
Yet, though the last breath of my struggling life
Go out amid its billows, waver not,
But still believe in me.

I know that glorious scenes will charm my eyes,
And wastes of endless summer tempt my feet ;

Yet will my heart turn to these northern skies,
And the snow-tempests, and the rattling sleet, —
Wherefore, believe in me.

And you will be transfigured in my sight
By time and distance ; — beautiful as a star
Toward which, with love and longing infinite,
I stretch my fond arms vainly from afar.
O love, believe in me !

Farewell ! Now lay your hand upon my head,
And let it leave a blessing where it lies :
Speak not, — your eyes have left no word unsaid :
It is enough. I will be true and wise, —
Only believe in me !



ROCK ME TO SLEEP.



ACKWARD, turn backward, O Time,
in your flight,

Make me a child again just for to-night !

Mother, come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore ;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair ;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep ; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep !

Backward, flow backward, O tide of the years !
I am so weary of toil and of tears, —
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain, —
Take them, and give me my childhood again !
I have grown weary of dust and decay, —
Weary of flinging my soul-wealth away ;
Weary of sowing for others to reap ; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep !

Tired of the hollow, the base, the untrue,
Mother, O mother, my heart calls for you !

Many a summer the grass has grown green,
Blossomed and faded, our faces between :
Yet, with strong yearning and passionate pain,
Long I to-night for your presence again.
Come from the silence so long and so deep ; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep !

Over my heart, in the days that are flown,
No love like mother-love ever has shone ;
No other worship abides and endures, —
Faithful, unselfish, and patient like yours :
None like a mother can charm away pain
From the sick soul and the world-weary brain.
Slumber's soft calms o'er my heavy lids creep ; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep !

Come, let your brown hair, just lighted with gold,
Fall on your shoulders again as of old ;
Let it drop over my forehead to-night,
Shading my faint eyes away from the light ;
For with its sunny-edged shadows once more
Haply will throng the sweet visions of yore ;
Lovingly, softly, its bright billows sweep ; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep !

Mother, dear mother, the years have been long
Since I last listened your lullaby song :
Sing, then, and unto my soul it shall seem
Womanhood's years have been only a dream.
Clasped to your heart in a loving embrace,
With your light lashes just sweeping my face,
Never hereafter to wake or to weep ; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep !



MARCH.



HE brown buds thicken on the trees,
 Unbound, the free streams sing,
 As March leads forth across the leas
 The wild and windy spring.

Where in the fields the melted snow
 Leaves hollows warm and wet,
 Ere many days will sweetly blow
 The first blue violet.

Dear flower-germs, which so long have lain
 Within your wintry tomb,
 Listening for April's vital rain
 To call you into bloom, —

O push the damp, dead leaves apart,
 And spread your blossoms o'er
 The little grave by which my heart
 Sits weeping evermore !

SPRING AT THE CAPITAL.



THE poplar drops beside the way
Its tasselled plumes of silver-gray ;
The chestnut pouts its great brown buds,
Impatient for the laggard May.

The honeysuckles lace the wall ;
The hyacinths grow fair and tall ;
And mellow sun and pleasant wind and odorous
bees are over all.

Down looking in this snow-white bud,
How distant seems the war's red flood !
How far remote the streaming wounds, the sick-
ening scent of human blood !

For Nature does not recognize
This strife that rends the earth and skies ;
No war-dreams vex the winter sleep of clover-
heads and daisy-eyes.

She holds her even way the same,
Though navies sink or cities flame ;

A snow-drop is a snow-drop still, despite the
nation's joy or shame.

When blood her grassy altar wets,
She sends the pitying violets

To heal the outrage with their bloom, and cover
it with soft regrets.

O crocuses with rain-wet eyes,
O tender-lipped anemones,

What do ye know of agony and death and blood-
won victories ?

No shadow breaks your sunshine-trance,
Though near you rolls, with slow advance,

Clouding your sunshine leaves with dust, the
anguish-laden ambulance.

Yonder a white encampment hums ;
The clash of martial music comes ;

And now your startled stems are all a-tremble with
the jar of drums.

Whether it lessen or increase,
Or whether trumpets shout or cease,
Still deep within your tranquil hearts the happy
bees are murmuring, "Peace!"

O flowers! the soul that faints or grieves
New comfort from your lips receives;
Sweet confidence and patient faith are hidden in
your leaves.

Help us to trust, still on and on,
That this dark night will soon be gone,
And that these battle-stains are but the blood-red
trouble of the dawn, —

Dawn of a brighter, whiter day
Than ever blessed us with its ray, —
A dawn beneath whose purer light all guilt and
wrong shall fade away.

Then shall our nation break its bands,
And, silencing the envious lands,
Stand in the searching light unshamed, with spot-
less robes, and clean, white hands.

“BLESSED DREAMS.”



THE sunset's smile had left the sky,

The moon rose calm and fair,

As low a little maiden knelt

To breathe her nightly prayer ; —

And thus her brief petition rose,

In simple words and few :

“ Dear Lord, please send us blessed dreams,

And let them all come true ! ”

O, I have stood in temples grand,

Where in the rainbowed gloom

Rose pompous prayers from priestly lips,

Through clouds of dense perfume

But never one has seemed to me

So guileless, pure, and new, —

“ Dear Lord, please send us blessed dreams,

And let them all come true ! ”

Ah, little maiden, kneeling there,

Beneath the sunset skies,

What need have we of other prayer
Than yours, so sweet and wise?
Henceforth I breathe no studied plea,
But bow and pray with you, —
"Dear Lord, please send us blessed dreams,
And let them all come true!"



TWO SUMMERS



LAST summer, when athwart the sky
Shone the immeasurable days,
We wandered slowly, you and I,
Adown these leafy forest-ways,

With laugh and song and sportive speech,
And mirthful tales of earlier years,
Though deep within the soul of each
Lay thoughts too sorrowful for tears,

Because — I marked it many a time —
Your feet grew slower day by day,
And where I did not fear to climb
You paused to find an easier way.

And all the while a boding fear
Pressed hard and heavy on my heart ;
Yet still with words of hope and cheer
I bade the gathering grief depart,

Saying, "When next these purple bells
And these red columbines return, —
When woods are full of piny smells
And this faint fragrance of the fern, —

"When the wild white-weed's bright surprise
Looks up from all the strawberryed plain
Like thousands of astonished eyes, —
Dear child, you will be well again!"

Again the marvellous days are here;
Warm on my cheek the sunshine burns,
And fledged birds chirp, and far and near
Floats the strange sweetness of the ferns.

But now these ways I walk alone,
Tearless, companionless, and dumb, —
Or rest upon this wayside stone,
To wait for one who does not come.

Yet all is even as I foretold:
The summer shines on wave and wild,
The fern is fragrant as of old,
And you are well again, dear child!

THE RETURN OF THE REGIMENT.



THE bells boom out to the cloudy sky,
The deep drums beat tumultuously,
And the martial music's crash and cry
Make all the city dumb ;

There are tender eyes at every pane,
And, spite of wind and sifting rain,
From square and alley, street and lane,
The eager people come.

What do they come to seek and see ?

Why do they gaze so earnestly ?

What may the strange attraction be ?

A handful of haggard men !

Men who have stepped in crimson stains
Warmly flowing from traitorous veins, —
Soldiers from red Antietam's plains,
Heroes of battles ten.

Ah, it is only a little while

Since in unbroken rank and file,

Cheered by many a nod and smile
From thousands as they passed by,
Fresh in their unstained uniform,
Eyes all hopeful and hearts all warm,
They went to meet the Southern storm,
To triumph — or to die.

Fourteen months have passed since then, —
Fourteen months, and battles ten, —
The men are old, and the boys are men,
Grown grave before their time ;
And in their features the gazer sees
The bitter wisdom of times like these,
The sharply-cut experiences
Which make men's lives sublime.

Mute and strange are their faces all ;
Nothing less than a battle-call,
With boom of cannon and shriek of ball,
Could shake their even breath ;
Written in every line and curve
Are tales of courage and iron nerve, —
Of fire-tried hearts that never swerve
From danger or from death.

Haggard with toil, fatigue, and pain,
Soiled and smoky with battle-stain,
Back they come to their homes again,
 Changed as by many years ;
But leaning out from the gazing bands
Many a woman silent stands,
Who longs to grasp their hard, brown hands,
 And wash them white with tears !

Their banner wide in the wind unrolls,
Tattered and ragged with bullet-holes ;
Think of the strong, heroic souls
 Who hailed it as their pride ;
And with their faint and anguished eyes,
Lifted in deathful agonies,
Saw it between them and the skies,
 Blessed it, and blessing died !

Many a cheek at the memory pales ;
The jubilant music faints and fails,
Dying in low and mournful wails
 For those whose graves are green ;
The crowd grows still with a conscious dread,
So still that you almost hear the tread,

The ghostly tread, of the gallant dead
Who walk in the ranks unseen.

Crippled and mangled in trunk and limb
Are these, whose souls have passed the brim
Of that wide sea which, strange and dim,
Knows no returning flow ;
Solemn and still, in strange array,
Pallid with illness, and gaunt and gray, —
The ghosts of those who went away
But fourteen months ago !

The eyes of women and lips of men
Welcome the soldiers of battles ten,
Coming back to their homes again,
Sobered, but not dismayed.
Uncover your head and hold your breath ;
This boon not every lifetime hath, —
To look on men who have walked with death,
And have not been afraid !

AN OLD PORTRAIT.



HIS time-worn canvas bears a pictured
face,

Which, once beheld, comes back to
thought again, —

Passionate, proud, yet touched with tender grace,
And marked with lines which tell of hidden pain.

O noble face! in whose compelling eyes
There lurks a power which stays me on my way,
Which thrills me always with a new surprise,
And holds me gazing half the livelong day, —

Strange eyes, whose earthly task of smiles and tears
Was finished long ago, and sealed in night;
Eyes which were closed in death a hundred years
Before mine own had opened to the light, —

Why do you haunt me so? Some bitter days,
When all the rose-tints vanish from my sky,
And I go stumbling down life's darkest ways,
I can but think perhaps the reason why

My life has been so barren and forlorn,
So full of tears and losses, is that Fate
Made some unkind mistake, and I was born
An age too early or an age too late.

And when I read in these strange, wistful eyes
The yearning lack of something which I know
They never found in life, I think with sighs
A century too late, — ah, more's the woe!

Perhaps I am the one for whom he sought,
Walking the earth's dry places o'er and o'er,
Calling for her, alas! who answered not,
And, never finding, lacked forevermore!

Perhaps I might have lived a nobler life,
If but these marvellous eyes had held me dear;
Perhaps I might have soothed the proud soul's strife,
Outlooking from their darkness deep and clear;—

Perhaps — who knows? O sad and tender eyes,
Look not upon me so reproachfully;
Since bitterly my soul forever cries,
“O cruel Love, that did not wait for me!”

KARL.



Up the sky in silence holy
Comes the young moon slowly, slowly,
Softly with her light divine,
Filling, like a cup with wine.

On the broad bay falls her lustre,
Where the anchored vessels cluster,
While their sails gleam snowy-white,
Brightened by her pearly light.

Thou whose restless high endeavor
Led thee from my sight forever
To thy home beyond the sea,
Comes there any thought of me ?

Only last year thou wast roaming
With me in the dewy gloaming,
Talking with low murmuring lips
Of the moonlight and the ships.

Now again I wander nightly,
When the radiance, falling whitely
All across the sleeping bay,
Builds a broad and shining way ;

But the scene, so dreamy, tender,
Loses half its mystic splendor,
Since upon the whispering shore
Thou wilt walk with me no more.

For, though fame and beauty ever
Crown thine earnest life-endeavor,
On the moon-rise and the sea
Thou hast looked thy last with me.



A POTOMAC PICTURE.



LITTLE shallop floating slow along
 The fair Potomac's tide,
 The oarsman, pausing for a simple song,
 Sung softly at his side ; —

A quaint, old-fashioned love-song, such as stirs
 All tender souls, and thrills
 To sudden youth the hearts of grandmothers,
 Among New England's hills.

Great boughs of laurel garlanding the boat,
 Won from the bloomy store
 Of forests, lying purple and remote
 Along the eastern shore.

Far off, the city and the growing dome
 Of the fair Capitol, —
 White and ethereal as the feathery foam
 Fringing the oar-blade's fall.

A fort looks down in silence from the hill,
 Holding its fiery breath,
As loath to mar the peace so sweet and still
 By any thought of death.

The blossomed fruit-trees drape the frowning walls,
 Disputing all their gloom,
And on the pyramids of cannon-balls,
 Drops the white chestnut-bloom.

The mounted guns, all threatening and grim,
 Speak not their thunderous words, —
And in and out among their muzzles skim,
 Unscared, the meadow birds.

In the horizon waits one patient star,
 A sphere of silver white,
While the full moon, above the hill-tops far,
 Slow reddens into sight ;

Building across the waves, with golden light,
 A wondrous "road to Spain," —
But ah ! the Alhambra's courts would tempt to-night
 Our charmed eyes in vain !

AWAY FROM HOME.



CROSS my life has dropped a dreary
change ;

These streets are foreign, and these
skies are strange ;

I hear no home-voice all the dull day through :
All hearts are alien, and all faces new.

The clouds are heavy, and the day is bleak ;
In the wild wind the rattling windows creak.
I sit alone, and ponder mournfully
How strangely I am lost away from thee !

I miss the hand which gave me strength to strive ;
I miss the love that kept my heart alive ;
I miss the many masts, the free, fair sea :
I lose all things I love, in losing thee !

Alas, alas ! since all the wide world through
Thou only wast most tender and most true !
And though I roam forever, still to me
The world is all alike, away from thee.

Ah, when the sunset goldens all the bay
And the white sails are resting from their play,
Walk where we used to walk, and think of me
Who have no longer either masts or sea.

Ah, thou, whose dear eyes watched the way I went,
Look toward the city of my banishment!
Let me not be forsaken utterly ; —
Stretch thy fond arms, and hold me close to thee !



THINE.

The tide will ebb at day's decline :

Ich bin dein !

Impatient for the open sea,

At anchor rocks the tossing ship, —

The ship which only waits for thee ;

Yet with no tremble of the lip

I say again, thy hand in mine,

Ich bin dein !

I shall not weep, or grieve, or pine :

Ich bin dein !

Go, lave once more thy restless hands

Afar within the azure sea, —

Traverse Arabia's scorching sands, —

Fly where no thought can follow thee,

O'er desert waste and billowy brine :

Ich bin dein !

Dream on the slopes of Apennine :

Ich bin dein !

Stand where the glaciers freeze and frown,
Where Alpine torrents flash and foam,
Or watch the loving sun go down
Behind the purple hills of Rome,
Leaving a twilight half divine :

Ich bin dein !

Thy steps may fall beside the Rhine :

Ich bin dein !

Slumber may kiss thy drooping lids
Amid the mazes of the Nile,
The shadow of the Pyramids
May cool thy feet, — yet all the while,
Though storms may beat, or stars may shine,

Ich bin dein !

Where smile the hills of Palestine,

Ich bin dein !

Where rise the mosques and minarets, —
Where every breath brings flowery balms, —
Where souls forget their dark regrets
Beneath the strange, mysterious palms, —
Where the banana builds her shrine, —

Ich bin dein !

Too many clusters break the vine :

Ich bin dein !

The tree whose strength and life outpour

In one exultant blossom-gush

Must flowerless be forevermore :

We walk *this* way but once, friend ; — hush !

Our feet have left no trodden line :

Ich bin dein !

Who heaps his goblet wastes his wine :

Ich bin dein !

The boat is moving from the land ; —

I have no chiding and no tears ; —

Now give me back my empty hand

To battle with the cruel years, —

Behold, the triumph shall be mine !

Ich bin dein !



THE WAY TO YOUTH.



WHEN Grace and Beauty are left behind,
And Time and Change are no longer
kind,

And hands wax nerveless, and eyes grow blind,
How sweet and pleasant it is to find

The way to Immortal Youth!

O, how blessed to fling away
These tell-tale symbols of dull decay, —
The hair which barter its gold for gray,
The limbs which falter from day to day, —
And follow the way to Youth!

Travelled by many, and trodden well, —
Quiet, and bordered with asphodel;
And at the ending, — ah, who may tell
The happy story of those who dwell
In perfect and deathless Youth?

Their faded faces grow young and fair, —
The smile returns that they used to wear;

Their brows remember no line of care,
And the gold comes back to their brightened hair,
In the realm of deathless Youth.

The door is narrow, — the arch is low,
And up to the keystone the violets grow,
And the dead leaves drift, and the snow-falls blow ;—
But little they heed or care, who go
In search of Immortal Youth.

No sentinel guards it with stern command,
But under its shadow the angels stand
Waiting to clasp the pilgrim's hand,
And lead him into the Morning Land,
The Land of Immortal Youth.



TEMPT ME NO MORE.



TEMPT me no more ; — thy tones are
 sweet and deep,
 Yet they fall vainly on my weary ears :
 Pass on, and leave me here to dream and weep,
 Counting the footfalls of the lonesome years ; —
 Tempt me no more !

My wreath of life holds no fresh bloom for thee, —
 Its flowers are strewn on unforgotten graves, —
 Only its withered leaves remain to me,
 And they drift darkly toward death's wintry
 waves ; —
 Tempt me no more.

Gather not rose-leaves trampled in the dust :
 No kindness can their wasted bloom renew.
 Go, let them die unheeded, as they must ;
 Seek thou for blossoms fresh and bright with
 dew ; —
 Tempt me no more !

APRIL.



THE strange, sweet days are here again,
The happy-mournful days ;
The songs which tremble on our lips
Are half complaint, half praise.

A sadness in the softened air,
And in the tenderer sky ;
A touch of heartache everywhere :
We weep, yet know not why.

The wind is full of memories ;
It whispers low and clear
The sacred echoes of the past,
And brings the dead more near.

The breath of budded hyacinths
Is heavy on the breeze ;
The peach-tree twigs are strung with pink,
And murmurous with bees.

Swing, robin, on the budded sprays,
And sing your blithest tune; —
Help us across these homesick days
Into the joy of June !



AT THE GATE



F AINT and trembling, tired and late,
I approach the bolted gate ;
And with humbleness sincere,
Knock, and crave admittance here, —
Worn with wanderings long and sore :
Open the door !

Asking neither alms nor food,
Only rest and quietude ;
Hear, I pray, my humble plaint, —
Never soul so tired and faint
Craved compassion here before :
Open the door !

O, how soft the couch will be,
Folded down so peacefully,
Pillows fair and dainty-white,
Shaded from the tiresome light,
By dim angels hovering o'er :
Open the door !

Never on an earthly bed
Was so dainty drapery spread,
Spangled bright with buds and bees,
Broidered with anemones ; —
Hear me, Angel, I implore :
 Open the door !

Once I longed for Wealth and Place,
Happiness, and Love's sweet grace, —
Now there lives within my breast
Only this one wish, — for Rest, —
Only Rest, — I ask no more :
 Open the door !



P E A C E .



PEACE I leave with you!" From the
 days departed
 Floats down the blessing, simple and
 serene,

Which to His followers, few and fearful-hearted,
 With yearning love thus spake the Nazarene, —
 "Peace I leave with you!"

"Peace I leave with you!" — and His words I
 borrow
 To wrap about you like a suit of mail, —
 The power to give I earned in bitter sorrow,
 And by your faith in me, it shall not fail; —
 "Peace I leave with you!"

"My peace I give unto you!" — but bestowing
 Robbed not his soul of its tranquillity, —
 While I, — the peace I give to you, in going,
 Is leaving me in utter poverty, —
 "Peace I leave with you!"

Therefore, because I keep it not, as solely
To my own selfish needs and longings true, —
Because I give as He gave, freely, wholly, —
“ Not as the world gives, give I unto you, —
Peace I leave with you ! ”

“ Peace I leave with you ! ” Lo, in earnest blessing
My hand is on your brow, as ne'er before, —
The touch it leaves there, though so lightly pressing
Shall seal your soul to peace forevermore ; —
“ Peace I leave with you ! ”



L O S T .



HE word has come ; — go forth
 An outcast and a blot upon the earth ;
 Lo, the fierce angel, with his sword of
 flame,

And brow of bitter blame,

Stands at the portal, and commands thee, — hark !

“ Go forth into the dark,
 The blind and pitiless dark,
 Perdita ! ”

Go forth into the storm,

Wrap the rough sackcloth round thy delicate form,

Since torn forever thence

Are the fair garments of thine innocence,

Which not by prayer, nor penance, nor much pain,

Can be made white again,

Perdita !

Nay, it is vain to plead, —

There is no hand to help, no ear to heed, —

Not even his, whose art

Did win and cast aside thy credulous heart, —

Who from thy forehead gathered ruthlessly
The luminous lilies of white Purity,
 And planted there instead
Shame's heavy blossoms, broad and scarlet-red,
 Perdita !

Whom thou wouldst die to please ;
Whom thou hast followed on thy bleeding knees
 Through wrong and woe and strife,
To kiss his footsteps in the dust of life, —
 Pleading with tears the while
For the great blessing of a word or smile,
 As starvelings plead for bread,
To those, who, taunting, fling a stone instead, —
 Perdita !

Lift not thy pleading eyes
To the calm scorn of the unpitying skies, —
 Hide thy dishonored brow, —
Sweet Mercy's smile is not for such as thou,
 Perdita !

NIGHTFALL.



WINTER and snow-drifts compass me, —

You dwell where warmth and sun-
shine are, —

Between, the miles stretch drearily ;

O inaccessible and far !

I wonder if your memory thrills

When threatening clouds the sunset drown ?

Look toward these bleak and desolate hills,

Beloved, when the night shuts down !

O winter-fettered soul ! O love,

With sorrow's self forever twinned !

The cold skies threaten from above, —

The wild waves wrestle with the wind, —

While Eve unbraids her shadowy locks,

And scatters stars amid their brown, —

Think of the sea-shore and the rocks,

Beloved, when the night shuts down !

Since I am swept so utterly

Into the distance dim and far,

Do you forget my love and me,
As heaven forgets a banished star ?
O for a whisper from your lips
My fear to crush, — my hope to crown !
Think of the harbor and the ships,
Beloved, when the night shuts down !

The lonesome sea-bird soars and sails
In devious circles, as of old, —
A ship with white wings fades and fails
Into the far heaven, gray and cold, —
And dimness now the distance fills, —
The waves grow dark, the chill skies frown, —
Look toward these bleak and desolate hills,
Beloved, when the night shuts down !



JUNE.



EVER was my life's neglected garden
Half so full of fragrance as to-day, —
Never has the world been half so radiant,
Nor its shapes of sorrow and dismay
Ever seemed so few and far away.

Wide the chestnut waves its spreading branches,
In a white bewilderment of bloom, —
And the lilacs overwhelmed with blossoms,
Drooping like a wounded warrior's plume,
Hang their faint heads heavy with perfume.

On the sea a veil of silvery softness,
Faint, and filmy, and mysterious, lies, —
Blending doubtfully the far horizon
With the azure of the smiling skies,
Tender as the blue of loving eyes.

On the grass the fallen apple-blossoms
Heap a pillow rosy-hued and rare,

While the dim ghosts of the dandelions
Sail serenely in the untroubled air, —
And the clover blushes everywhere.

In the leaves a bobolink is pouring
Passion-songs which brook no pause or rest —
Hark ! how gushingly the liquid music
Swells and overflows his trembling breast,
Like a love that cannot be repressed !

O the joy, the luxury, the rapture,
Thus to brush away the chains of care,
Thus to drop the mask from heart and forehead, —
To be glad and young again, and wear
Lilies-of-the-valley in my hair !

Far away, unfelt and scarce remembered,
Seems the world-life, harsh and turbulent,
So much harmony, and joy and beauty,
In this matchless day of days are blent :
I desire no more, — I am content !

“THE UPWARD ROAD.”



If thou hadst told me, when the bloom
Of last year's June was on the tree,
That ere another spring should come
I should have looked my last on thee, —

If I had known that now, alas!
Our ways would lie so far apart,
That now the clover-blooms and grass
Would wave above thy pulseless heart, —

That when my thoughts should turn to thee,
Thy olden smile and word to crave,
It would but lead me mournfully
Beside a newly-sodded grave, —

I should have clasped thy friendly hand
With warmer pressure, when we met,
Nor blindly failed to understand
The eyes whose meaning haunts me yet ;

Within whose mellow darkness lay
A prescience of the change to be,
A shadow soft, which hid away
All that is now revealed to me.

The scent of young leaves fills the way, —
The showers walk lightly o'er the hills;
And every night and every day
The prophecy of May fulfils,—

The lilacs, purpling to the eaves,
Fling all their fragrant spikes about,
The chestnut spreads its fingered leaves
And hangs its mimic lanterns out, —

The orchards tempt the wandering bees
With wastes of white-and-rosy bloom,
Where Eolus, with viewless keys,
Unlocks the flood-gates of perfume;

But thou, whose loving eyes were keen
To catch the glories of the spring,
Sleepest beneath thy veil of green,
Unmindful of the joys they bring;

For thou hast done with woe and strife,
Hast laid time's burden meekly down, —
And on thy brow immortal life
Gathers its radiance like a crown.

Thy feet have found "the upward road,"
Of which, but now, thou toldest me,
While, bending underneath my load,
I follow slowly after thee.



PROMOTED.



DEAD, ere existence reached its perfect
 prime,
 A hero-martyr. In his morning years
 He gathered up the riches of his life,
 His fair, fresh youth, his high and noble hopes,
 All that had been, or was, or would be dear, —
 All that is possible to strong young souls,
 And laid them at his suffering country's feet ;
 Saying, as fondly as a lover might,
 " All, even to my life, is hers I love,
 And so my country's." When her sorest need
 Demanded at his hands the uttermost,
 Behold how cheerfully he yielded it,
 Dying as calmly as one falls asleep
 After the perils of the day are past,
 And silver-sweet the evening bugle-call
 Speaks peace and rest.

The world lost much, what time our hero died,
 For rarely has it owned a man like him, —

As pure of purpose, in these soiling times,
And single-hearted as a diamond,
The core of whose transparent soul is light ;
His was as tender as a woman's heart, —
His nature sweet and artless as a child's,
Yet strong and helpful. In his serious eyes
There shone the record of a clean, fair life
Which had no shame to hide, no stain to weep ;
He earned this sudden honor valiantly,
The quick promotion of a glorious death, —
“ Killed in the advance, while leading on his men.”
And would our selfish grief deny it him,
And long to call him back ? No, warrior-saint ;
Put on thy crown !

I do not know the place where he was laid,
After the long day's dreadful work was done.
They buried him upon the battle's brink,
His war-worn comrades, — gently, reverently,
With his young laurels fresh about his brow, —
And I might search there all the summer's day
Nor ever find him. But it is enough
To know his tender body is at rest,
And that the cannon will not break his sleep.

His name is safe among the shining names ;
His soul is safe in the good Father's care ;
And in the hush of this wet, fragrant night,
After the dust, the battle, and the heat,
The loving rain-drops cool upon his grave,
And the veiled stars will watch there till the day.

Dear heart, sleep well !

Death, the great purifier, scarce could make
His face more pure ; and yet I long to know
The added beauty which it printed there.
But that sweet sorrow will not come to me,
I can but keep his features as they were.
I know the fatal bullet dared not strike
The brow whereon his mother left her kiss ;
I hope there is no blood-stain on his cheek ;
I hope his lips still keep their tender smile,
That his true hand yet rests upon his sword,
And that anemones and violets,
Taught by the grateful year that is to come,
Will find the nameless pillow where he lies,
And wrap him in the colors which he loved, —
The colors in whose dear defence he died,
Red, white, and blue !

VINE-LIFE.



IN the dead barrenness of winter time
I marked this woodbine latticing the
wall,

And said, "How pleasantly in summer's prime
This vine shall beautify and curtain all!"

Ere yet in leafless elms the robins sung,
Nature touched tenderly the network screen,
And with her silent fingers slowly strung
The limber stems with gems of living green.

Yet some remained unbudded. Day by day
I watched, — but not late April's gracious air,
Nor yet the warmer smiles of perfect May,
Brought promise to the tendrils brown and bare.

Whereat I grieved. "The winter was unkind,"
I said, "to shatter thus my summer dream; —
How shall these dry limbs scatter shade, or blind
My window from the sultry August beam?"

Yet see how June my faithless murmuring mocks!

Lo, those new vigorous shoots, all fresh with
leaves,

Clasp with their clinging hands these dry, dead
stalks,

And clamber up, rejoicing, to the eaves, —

Till the brown skeleton is all aleaf,

Fluttering and rain-fresh through its tendrilled
length, —

And that which once was death and bitter grief,

Becomes at once its glory and its strength.

Fettered and cramped by no depending cares,

Up their strange trellis the long garlands go,

As went the angels up the shining stairs

Of Jacob's vision in the long ago.

When shall we learn to read this life aright?

When to our souls will the sweet grace be given

To make our disappointment and our blight

But ladder-rounds to lift us nearer heaven?

THE WATCHERS.



WHEN the kind shadows dim the glaring
light,

And blessed Silence, with her watch-
ful care,

Lays her soft fingers on the lip of Night,

They come,—the Watchers with the shining hair.

So leave me, gentle friend, until the day;—

The hush of twilight creeps along the air,

And when your careful steps have died away

Will come the Watchers with the shining hair.

Turn down the lamp-light in the mellow globes,—

Dim, and yet dimmer, let its radiance be,—

Enough of light will scatter from the robes

Of those who wait to minister to me.

The household hum has faded into peace,

The last faint footfall dies along the stair,

And they are here, the peaceful Presences,—

The silent Watchers with the shining hair.

How silently ! the eye alone perceives

Their wave-like motions, as they come and go, —
Their steps fall noiselessly as falling leaves
Upon some lake wherein the lilies grow.

I know them not, who come and bless me so, —

Their faces all are beautiful, but strange ;
And yet I may have loved them long ago, —
Why should I be the only one to change ?

I know *thee*, sweet, — I know those loving eyes, —

I know that fair head's brown-and-golden wave, —
I know, too, the true heart which darkly lies
Far from the sunshine, buried in thy grave !

How would his soul forget its bitter strife

Could he but see thee as I see thee now, —
Fresh in the youth of the immortal life,
With bridal blooms still bright about thy brow !

O the sweet rest ye bring me ! — the release

From the close-clinging Nessus-robe of pain :
Ye calm the flying pulse, and charm to peace
The wildered fancies of the fevered brain.

Once more outside these prisoning chamber walls
I walk where May the dreaming wood awakes, —
Where through thick leaves the bashful sunlight
falls,
And the wind tells of buds and sprouting brakes.

My burning hands grow strong again, and cool,
Laved in a brook amid the leafy glooms,
With the cool roots of rushes tangled full,
And choked with grass, and water-loving blooms.

Faded! — and see, across my aching sight
Falls chill and cold the day's unwelcome glare,
For with the blessed shadows of the night
Depart the Watchers with the shining hair!



IN THE DEFENCES.



LONG the ramparts which surround the
 town
 I walk with evening, marking all the
 while

How night and autumn, closing softly down,
 Leave on the land a blessing and a smile.

In the broad streets the sounds of tumult cease,
 The gorgeous sunset reddens roof and spire,
 The city sinks to quietude and peace,
 Sleeping, like Saturn, in a ring of fire ;

Circled with forts, whose grim and threatening walls
 Frown black with cannon, whose abated breath
 Waits the command to send the fatal balls
 Upon their errands of dismay and death.

And see, directing, guiding, silently
 Flash from afar the mystic signal lights,
 As gleamed the fiery pillar in the sky
 Leading by night the wandering Israelites.

The earthworks, draped with summer weeds and
vines,

The rifle-pits, half hid with tangled briers,
But wait their time ; for see, along the lines
Rise the faint smokes of lonesome picket-fires,

Where sturdy sentinels on silent beat
Cheat the long hours of wakeful loneliness
With thoughts of home, and faces dear and sweet,
And, on the edge of danger, dream of bliss.

Yet at a word, how wild and fierce a change
Would rend and startle all the earth and skies
With blinding glare, and noises dread and strange,
And shrieks, and shouts, and deathly agonies.

The wide-mouthed guns would war, and hissing
shells
Would pierce the shuddering sky with fiery
thrills,

The battle rage and roll in thunderous swells,
And war's fierce anguish shake the solid hills.

But now how tranquilly the golden gloom
Creeps up the gorgeous forest-slopes, and flows

Down valleys blue with fringy aster-bloom, —
An atmosphere of safety and repose.

Against the sunset lie the darkening hills,
Mushroomed with tents, the sudden growth of
war ;

The frosty autumn air, that blights and chills,
Yet brings its own full recompense therefor ;

Rich colors light the leafy solitudes,
And far and near the gazer's eyes behold
The oak's deep scarlet, warming all the woods,
And spendthrift maples scattering their gold.

The pale beech shivers with prophetic woe,
The towering chestnut ranks stand blanched
and thinned,

Yet still the fearless sumac dares the foe,
And waves its bloody guidons in the wind.

Where mellow haze the hill's sharp outline dims,
Bare elms, like sentinels, watch silently,
The delicate tracery of their slender limbs
Pencilled in purple on the saffron sky.

Content and quietude and plenty seem
 Blessing the place, and sanctifying all ;
And hark ! how pleasantly a hidden stream
 Sweetens the silence with its silver fall !

The failing grasshopper chirps faint and shrill,
 The cricket calls, in massy covert hid,
Cheery and loud, as stoutly answering still
 The soft persistence of the katydid.

With dead moths tangled in its blighted bloom,
 The golden-rod swings lonesome on its throne,
Forgot of bees ; and in the thicket's gloom,
 The last belated peewee cries alone.

The hum of voices, and the careless laugh
 Of cheerful talkers, fall upon the ear ;
The flag flaps listlessly adown its staff ;
 And still the katydid pipes loud and near.

And now from far the bugle's mellow throat
 Pours out, in rippling flow, its silver tide ;
And up the listening hills the echoes float
 Faint and more faint and sweetly multiplied.

Peace reigns ; not now a soft-eyed nymph that
sleeps

Unvexed by dreams of strife or conqueror,
But Power, that, open-eyed and watchful, keeps
Unwearied vigil on the brink of war.

Night falls ; in silence sleep the patriot bands ;
The tireless cricket yet repeats its tune, .
And the still figure of the sentry stands
In black relief against the low full moon.



MY SHIP.



DOWN to the wharves, as the sun goes
down,

And the daylight's tumult and dust
and din

Are dying away in the busy town,

I go to see if my ship comes in.

I gaze far over the quiet sea,

Rosy with sunset, like mellow wine,

Where ships, like lilies, lie tranquilly,

Many and fair, — but I see not mine.

I question the sailors every night

Who over the bulwarks idly lean,

Noting the sails as they come in sight, —

“Have you seen my beautiful ship come in?”

“Whence does she come?” they ask of me;

“Who is her master, and what her name?”

And they smile upon me pityingly

When my answer is ever and ever the same.

O, mine was a vessel of strength and truth,
Her sails were white as a young lamb's fleece,
She sailed long since from the port of Youth, —
Her master was Love and her name was Peace.

And, like all beloved and beauteous things,
She faded in distance and doubt away, —
With only a tremble of snowy wings
She floated, swan-like, adown the bay.

Carrying with her a precious freight, —
All I had gathered by years of pain ;
A tempting prize to the pirate, Fate, —
And still I watch for her back again ; —

Watch for the earliest morning light,
Till the pale stars grieve o'er the dying day,
To catch the gleam of her canvas white
Among the islands which gem the bay.

But she comes not yet, — she will never come
To gladden my eyes and my spirit more ;
And my heart grows hopeless and faint and dumb,
As I wait and wait on the lonesome shore,

Knowing that tempest and time and storm
Have wrecked and shattered my beauteous bark ;
Rank sea-weeds cover her wasting form,
And her sails are tattered and stained and dark.

But the tide comes up, and the tide goes down,
And the daylight follows the night's eclipse, —
And still with the sailors, tanned and brown,
I wait on the wharves and watch the ships.

And still with a patience that is not hope,
For vain and empty it long hath been,
I sit on the rough shore's rocky slope,
And watch to see if my ship comes in.



BRINGING OUR SHEAVES WITH US.



THE time for toil has past, and night has
come, —

The last and saddest of the harvest
eves ;

Worn out with labor long and wearisome,
Drooping and faint, the reapers hasten home,
Each laden with his sheaves.

Last of the laborers, thy feet I gain,

Lord of the harvest ! and my spirit grieves
That I am burdened not so much with grain
As with a heaviness of heart and brain ; —
Master, behold my sheaves !

Few, light, and worthless, — yet their trifling weight
Through all my frame a weary aching leaves ;
For long I struggled with my hapless fate,
And stayed and toiled till it was dark and late, —
Yet these are all my sheaves.

Full well I know I have more tares than wheat, —
Brambles and flowers, dry stalks and withered
leaves,

Wherefore I blush and weep, as at thy feet
I kneel down reverently and repeat,
“ Master, behold my sheaves ! ”

I know these blossoms, clustering heavily,
With evening dew upon their folded leaves,
Can claim no value nor utility, —
Therefore shall fragrancancy and beauty be
The glory of my sheaves.

So do I gather strength and hope anew ;
For well I know thy patient love perceives
Not what I did, but what I strove to do, —
And though the full, ripe ears be sadly few,
Thou wilt accept my sheaves !

THE END.

RD

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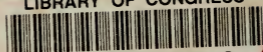
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